

## **Additions to Faith**

### **"Perseverance"**

#### **2 Peter 1:6**

### **Introduction**

We have been doing a series of messages on the Apostle Peter's Seven Additions to Your Faith found in the opening verses of the Apostle Peter's second letter. Today we will look at number four in the list; perseverance.

The Apostle Paul says you start with faith, but Peter says you need to add to your faith. So far, we have learned to add virtue, which acts as our moral compass in life. To virtue, we add knowledge, which is more than just simple facts and information. It includes spiritual knowledge that helps us understand God's instruction and commandments. To knowledge, we add temperance or self-control, which is learning to practice holiness and deference by saying, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." Self-control is the opposite of being a control freak. It is the ability actually to relinquish control. It is yielding control of your life and circumstances to the Holy Spirit and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and direct you.

We start with faith and add to our faith virtue. To virtue, we add knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control. Now, we add to self-control, perseverance. Let's read 2 Peter 1:1-11 once again, "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:1-11)

Perseverance is the fourth of the seven graces the Apostle Peter says must be added to our foundation of faith. It follows virtue, knowledge, and self-control but precedes godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, or love. It's probably appropriate that perseverance is at the center of Peter's list. Perseverance is a progressively learned grace and has several levels we must develop as a part of our Christian character.

Today I want us to examine four aspects of this grace called perseverance or what James calls patience. We'll look at:

- 1) Forbearance;
- 2) Longsuffering;
- 3) Endurance; and
- 4) Steadfastness.

So, first, let's talk about forbearance.

## **I. FORBEARANCE**

Forbearance is probably the most basic form of patience. *Strong's Concordance* gives us these synonyms for forbearance: self-restraint, tolerance, reliability, and simply putting up with. Forbearance is an action of relatively short-term self-restraint or an act of tolerance. It is something you grant to another person or group of people who have wronged you somehow. Forbearance can be shown with a loving heart or begrudgingly. The Bible says that God exercises forbearance with us. Has God ever had to tolerate or put up with you?

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 3:25 that it was Jesus "whom God set forth *as* a propitiation (appeasement) by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." ([Romans 3:25-26](#))

Why would God do this? Because earlier, in verse 23, Paul said, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." When we sinned, we became partakers of the just penalty of death. God's forbearance does not remove the penalty of death upon humanity. The good news, however, is that God's forbearance is directly associated with a plan for our recovery from sin through the redemptive work of Jesus. In other words, you may have messed up, but Christ has come to redeem you! Unfortunately, people continue to fall further and further away from God's perfect plan, yet God continues to tolerate their downward spiral and restrains himself from interfering with their choices.

Why does God exercise this great forbearance? God's hope is that we will learn the great sinfulness of sin and realize that His plan will free us from the stranglehold of sin. As followers of Christ, we, too, must learn to exercise forbearance. That doesn't mean we condone sin. It means we hope that a person's experiences with the destructiveness of sin will one day cause them to call out to God for His help. God's hope is that you will choose to leave your sin behind and trust God with all of your heart!

However, forbearance has an even more profound effect on us. Paul often talked about his life as a Christian and the many trials he endured. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul says that even though we are persecuted, we forbear; we tolerate and restrain

ourselves from retaliating. In I Corinthians 4:1,2, he says, " Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)

Forbearance toward others is part of our stewardship responsibility. It is not an easy lesson to learn. Why is it so difficult? - Because forbearance is usually a short-term response to someone's actions or words. Our fallen flesh is notorious for wanting "payback" or immediate retaliation, which is usually in direct opposition to forbearance. What do situations like this say about us as Christians? Could it be that Christ does not have as much control of us as we may think? Shouldn't our new mind in Christ have taken control over our fleshly response so the flesh couldn't have gained the victory? Our fallen flesh is stronger than we realize, and when the Holy Spirit does not properly control it, it will always get us into trouble!

Moses faithfully demonstrated forbearance to his fellow Israelites for nearly forty years. He tolerated their complaining, restrained himself when they lacked faith, and put up with their constant murmuring. But, near the end of his life, when God told him to speak to the rock to get water for the "always complaining" Israelites, it was more than Moses could take. His flesh got the best of him, and in disobedience, he angrily struck the rock rather than speaking to it as God had instructed. Moses failed the test of forbearance and even claimed credit for the water instead of giving the glory to God. According to Numbers 20, Moses was not allowed to cross over the Jordan and enter the land of promise. (Numbers 20:7-12) Of course, God still considered Moses a faithful servant (Hebrews 11:23-29), but this experience late in life cost him dearly.

Practicing forbearance is serious business and is an essential step in the development of perseverance.

The second aspect to consider is longsuffering.

## **II. LONGSUFFERING**

Longsuffering is similar to forbearance. The main difference is that longsuffering is a character quality developed and exercised over the long haul of your experiences.

The Greek word for longsuffering means to: bear long, be slow to anger, slow to punish, slow to avenge, and slow to wrath. It means to go for an extended time without exercising wrath. In Romans 2:3, Paul writes, "And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:3-4)

God is described as both forbearing and longsuffering, which are the products of "the riches of His goodness." In His longsuffering, God is slow to anger, slow to wrath, and slow to avenge. Paul says that God practices forbearance and longsuffering towards us to lead us to repentance.

God is patient with us, so we have an opportunity to sincerely repent of our sins and change how we live our lives. In I Peter 3:20, Peter says, "The Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." Even though only eight persons escaped the flood, God was longsuffering and gave the people every opportunity to repent and join Noah and his family.

However, just because God is longsuffering does not mean he will never bring judgment upon us. Genesis, Chapter 6 tells us that God's initial declaration that he would destroy all flesh eventually did take place. But during the time the ark was being prepared, God was longsuffering. Why? To give anyone who might have a repentant heart the opportunity to turn toward him. Once again, God was slow to wrath, slow to avenge, slow to punish—longsuffering.

In Romans 9:22, we find another example of God's longsuffering. With respect to God's chosen people—Israel, Paul writes, "What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" ([Romans 9:22](#))

Paul is speaking about the people of the nation of Israel and calls them "vessels of wrath." The word translated "willing" suggests that they had a choice. God endured "with much longsuffering," Paul says. Why would he do this? For the hope that some might repent and turn to serve him.

The longsuffering of God with Israel lasted many centuries, right up to the time he sent Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah. A few did repent and accept Jesus and received the blessings of the grace of Christ. However, the nation, as a whole, failed to benefit from God's longsuffering, even crucifying the one who was their Messiah. As a result, Israel was left desolate, the nation was destroyed, and the remnant was scattered.

God's longsuffering does not mean that there will never be judgment. The disobedient and faithless will not continue indefinitely. If this were the end of the story, God's longsuffering would never serve any real purpose or have any lasting benefit. The good news is that Israel will eventually learn her lesson and be re-established as a nation and a covenant-keeping people of God.

Ultimately, the New Covenant, which God will establish with Israel, will flow out to the entire world. Then, the longsuffering of God will have achieved its fullest goal and purpose. The people of God that have truly repented and received Christ will become the people in Covenant relationship with the One True God.

Paul says in Ephesians 4, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, we should forbear one another in love." In Colossians 3:12, he writes, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another."

In James 5:7,8,10, the Greek word for longsuffering is used four times. The New King James Bible translates it as patience. "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience." (James 5:7-10 NKJV)

Both Paul and Peter express their appreciation for God's longsuffering toward them. In I Timothy 1:15, Paul says, "This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life." (1 Timothy 1:15-16 NKJV)

Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV)

If it weren't for God's patience with us, how many of you know, none of us would ever be saved!

## **Conclusion**

In I Corinthians, chapter 13, the famous love chapter, Paul simply but powerfully states in verse 4, "Charity [Greek, '*agape*' love] suffers long." God's *agape* love is longsuffering.

In Hebrews 6:11, Paul connects patience and faith. He writes, "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "SURELY BLESSING I WILL BLESS YOU, AND MULTIPLYING I WILL MULTIPLY YOU." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. (Hebrews 6:11-15 NKJV)

In faith, the promises of God are fulfilled through our patience and longsuffering. Faith in God promises us a better day and gives us the confidence and assurance we need to overcome trials, testing, ridicule, and even persecution.

The Early Christians called longsuffering a "light affliction" because their faith assured them of these promises and the joy they knew would be theirs when they obtained them.—II Cor. 4:17.

Faith in Christ is the foundation upon which we build our Christian lives. But Peter says that we must add to our faith the kind of Christian character that reveals the life of Christ in us. Our faith is vitally connected to every aspect of this grace called patience. It includes forbearance, longsuffering, endurance, and steadfastness.

Next week we'll take a look at endurance and steadfastness. Peter says we start with faith. But then we add to our faith virtue and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control and to self-control what? Patience.