

Gentle Long suffering

Ministry of psalms

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This message covers

- What is long suffering?
- David and the ministry of psalms
- Christ our model

Information notice board

- 1) **About me.** Before I became a devoted Christian, I spent 20 years of my life being a hedonist – one who seeks pleasure for the sake of it. I was all leaves but no roots! Since God humbled me to turn me into his servant and I got baptized in May 2017, he has now overhauled my life to seek to be grounded in him to live by the Holy Spirit. You can read my full testimony [here](#):
- 2) **About these series.** The Lord Jesus gave me a single word “Blossom” as I was praying for a word for this season and series. This word will define a series of 12 topics he has also given me to tell his church about and build Christian character in his Holy Spirit. This lesson is one of those messages, but what does it mean to blossom?
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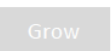
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Basics

The ministry of longsuffering is not a pleasant gospel to preach in our generation. We want to hear about prosperity and grace but if we don't correctly preach about longsuffering, the saints will grow weary from waiting continually only for good times, without accepting the tough ones and this is an injustice. In the Christian life, you just can't deny the fact that there is A LOT of suffering, in fact it ALMOST seems like a pattern, everyone in the bible who had the Spirit of Christ, suffered. It is really hard to find one who didn't suffer. Where then do we get this message of, there is no suffering in the kingdom? Here is a tough question to ponder over:

How do you know someone has Holy Spirit? What's the proof? Tongues? Prophecy? Goose Bumps? How about this:



“Happy are you if you are insulted because you are Christ's followers; this means that the glorious Spirit, the Spirit of God, is resting on you. If you suffer, it must not be because you are a murderer or a thief or a criminal or a meddler in other people's affairs. However, if you suffer because you are a Christian, don't be ashamed of it, but thank God that you bear Christ's name.” 1 Peter 4: 14-16 (GNT).

Now in these series of which this message is part 8, we are using an analogy of an orange tree growing to describe how a Christian matures in the Holy Spirit to the point of bearing lasting fruit. So, when growing an orange tree from a seed, over the 5 years, there are 5 key stages it goes through, but at each of these stages, something can go wrong!

1. Planting
 - Choosing the wrong seed
2. Sprouting
 - Not removing the outer covering when you are getting it ready for planting in the pot
 - Not putting it in enough soil in the pot
3. Growing
 - Not exposing it to enough water and sunlight
 - Not using enough fertiliser or manure so it gets sufficient nutrients including minerals
 - Weeds
 - Pests
 - Diseases
4. Flowering
 - Frost (cold weather)
 - Heat (too much sunlight/drought)
 - Too much wind
5. Pollination
 - Failure to be fertilised (hence 99% of flowers die)
6. Bearing Fruit
 - Picking too early when it's not ripe (juvenile plants could start bearing fruit even in year 2 but these are supposed to be removed)
 - Picking too late (so the fruit falls off).
 - Not being a skilled picker so the fruit is killed.
 - Fruit that is just not sweet but bitter!

At any of the stages, all the HARD WORK easily comes to nothing and yet if you get it right, did you know that once the orange tree matures that first time after say 5 years, you can enjoy fruit for the next 50 years and in many cases harvesting up to 3 times a year? When you consider the end product, you know that it is worth it.

As a Christian, how do you go through all the times when something could go wrong and in fact when some things indeed do go wrong?

First you remember that you are not the gardener or the master plant. God is the gardener and Jesus is the vine – the master plant and we are his branches. We therefore rest and endure. This is where long suffering (that is gentle) comes in but, what is gentle long suffering?

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **forbearance**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5: 22 -23 (NIV).*

Other bible versions instead of “forebearance” use the word “patience” (NLT) and “long suffering (KJV)”.

Long suffering as a word is derived from the Greek word: *Makrothymía* (mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah)

From *makrós*, "long" and *thymós*, "passion, anger" – properly, **long-passion**, i.e. waiting sufficient time before expressing anger. This avoids the premature use of force (retribution) that rises out of improper anger (a *personal reaction*).

makrothymía embraces steadfastness and staying-power. If in English we had an adjective 'long-tempered' as a counterpart to 'short-tempered,' then *makrothymia* could be called the quality of being 'long-tempered'

When our Lord asks us to exhibit gentle longsuffering, he is telling us to:

“Be long tempered and gentle when going through it”.

If an orange tree, knowing it will bear fruit for 50 years, exhibits long suffering, how do we likewise exhibit the same?

Examples from the bible: David’s ministry

Many times Christians point to Job as an example of suffering but it seems where Job seems to have suffered, it was likely for a relatively short time before God restored his fortunes. David on the other hand, seems to have suffered for a long time, right even when he was King.... and yet David wrote about half of the Psalms, which form our model of prayer and praise!

Psalms are really a dear part of the bible to me because in my early days when I was frustrated. I wasn't sure I understood this Christian thing, I sought the long. I told him, please teach me how to pray. He immediately replied with one word: Psalms!

Back to David. David is therefore a good model for studying longsuffering. Consider his story this way:

Did you know that the bible says, by the time David met Goliath he was just a boy:

“He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him.” 1 Samuel 17: 42

By the time he defeated Goliath, he had before that been anointed to be the next King by the Prophet Samuel (1 Sam 16).

By comparison, the bible says this about when he became king:

“David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.” 2 Samuel 5:4 (NIV).

If we estimate that David was between 10 and 15 years when anointed by the Prophet Samuel, he waited about 15 years before his call was fulfilled at the age of 30.

During this period, the Holy Spirit taught him long suffering. By the way, Jesus was the same age of 30 years when he began his early ministry (Luke 3: 23).

What happened to David in the in between? What kept him going? What happened to our Lord Jesus when he started his ministry?

David started at a spiritual high. After his anointing by Samuel, he went on to fight Goliath and slay him (1 Samuel 17) and hence he became a celebrity. And then disaster struck, the present King, Saul got jealous and eventually David had to run for his life.

During this period of running and hiding, he however wrote a number of psalms.

1. **He run to town of Nob - to Ahimelech the priest**, there Saul's Chief Herdsman Doeg betrayed him 1 (Sam 21:1-7). God rescued him and in thanks he wrote **Psalm 52**. Parts of it go thus:

*I trust in God's unfailing love
for ever and ever.
For what you have done I will always praise you
in the presence of your faithful people.*

2. **Then he run to King Achish of Gath**. When he realised he was in danger, he pretended to be mad (1 Sam 21: 10-15). He survived to write **Psalm 34** about the incidence. This psalm starts thus:

I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth (KJV).

3. **Next he runs to the cave of Adullam** (1 Sam 22. 1-4). This experience likely inspired him to write **Psalm 57**, likely also **Psalm 142. 3**. Psalm 57: 7- 8 say this:

*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.
Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.
I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.*

4. **Eventually he run to the Ziphite country** - in the wilderness and even there he is betrayed (1 Sam 23. 19-21). God rescued him again and he wrote **Psalm 54**.

Suffering is part of being a follower of Christ and the bible says so!

For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. Philippians 1: 29 (NLT).

A kingdom cannot be divided against itself and it cannot fight those who are it's own. If the master suffered, we the disciples suffer too. If they hated the master, they hate us too. Remember, they only hate those who have a different spirit from them and these are the ones they persecute but of course God is not afraid to call himself their God for all such who suffer are waiting for a city whose maker is God, so if you suffer, rejoice. Again I say, rejoice!

Let's not forget.... It's perseverance that leads to fruit, not just fair-weather Christianity:

"The seeds that fell in good soil stand for those who hear the message and retain it in a good and obedient heart, and they persist until they bear fruit." <http://bible.com/68/luk.8.15.gnt>

Remember, there is a reward and we can't comprehend what he has in store!

“But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”” <http://bible.com/114/1co.2.9.nkjv>

What do you do during times of suffering? The psalms are a great model for the one who is long suffering. Let’s see what lessons we can learn from them

1. Use the season to get ready for battle

“Praise the Lord, my protector! He trains me for battle and prepares me for war.” [psa.144.1.gnt](#)

2. Keep praising even in trouble

“Your rule is eternal, and you are king forever. The Lord is faithful to his promises; he is merciful in all his acts. He helps those who are in trouble; he lifts those who have fallen.” Psalms 145: 13 – 14 (GNT)

3. Don’t be silent. Call loudly to him for help!

*“If we had stopped worshiping our God and prayed to a foreign god, you would surely have discovered it, because you know our secret thoughts. **But it is on your account that we are being killed all the time, that we are treated like sheep to be slaughtered. Wake up, Lord! Why are you asleep? Rouse yourself! Don't reject us forever! Why are you hiding from us? Don't forget our suffering and trouble!**”*

[psa.44.20-24.gnt](#)

4. Ask for guidance, to see the way out plainly

*“Lord, I have so many enemies! Lead me to do your will; **make your way plain for me to follow.**”*

[psa.5.8.gnt](#)

5. Take courage, God hears the prayers of the lowly, he sees their tears.

*“You number my wanderings; **Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?** When I cry out to You, Then my enemies will turn back; This I know, because God is for me.”*

[psa.56.8-9.nkjv](#)

6. Don’t stay down. Hope for God to lift you

“The Lord guides us in the way we should go and protects those who please him. If they fall, they will not stay down, because the Lord will help them up.” Psalms 37: 23 – 25 (GNT).

7. He doesn’t necessarily deliver you from the suffering... but he is with you in it!

*“Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy, **To deliver** their soul from death, **And to keep them alive in famine.** Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, Because we have trusted in His holy name. Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, Just as we hope in You.” [psa.33.18-22.nkjv](#)*

Jesus’ example for our generation

The ministry of long suffering is one of prayer. It is the season of weathering the storms, to handle the rains, the hail, the snow, the winds. To come out of it, your best place to start is the psalms. Jesus referred to them when he faced his ultimate suffering.

If you have read Psalms 22 and read the gospels, you will see parallel’s with Jesus on the cross?ⁱ

Psalm 22

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David.

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?

2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.

3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises.

4 In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them.

5 To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people.

7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

8 "He trusts in the LORD," they say, "let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

9 Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.

10 From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.

11 Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

12 Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

13 Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me.

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me.

15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.

16 Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet.

17 All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me.

18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

19 But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

20 Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs.

21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

22 I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you.

23 You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

24 For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

25 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.

26 The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise him— may your hearts live forever!

27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,

28 for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.

29 All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive.

30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.

31 They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

Verse 1: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:46: “About the ninth hour Jesus cried in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani” – which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Verse 15: *My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. (A potsherd is a piece of broken pottery). It's dry as dust.*

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:48: Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

Verse 16: *They pierce my hands and my feet.*

Fulfilled in John 19:18: “Here they crucified him, and with him two others.”

Verse 31: They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

Jesus aptly culminated his work with these words, “It is finished.”

How did Jesus do develop in long suffering successfully?

“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)

Jesus' was able to endure the shame of the cross and sit down at the right hand of God because he patiently endured his suffering on the cross. He saw those who were insulting him and he had “long temper” he prayed for them, instead of cursing them – or God.

As he bled and died on the cross, he fixed his mind on the scriptures written so long ago by King David over 900 years before him and he remembered his ancestor's suffering. He must have remembered the promise of the angel to his mother Mary:

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David..” Luke 1: 32 (NIV).

Therefore, he endured the shame, knowing he could only receive the throne when he finished the work.

Therefore, we who bear the mark of Christ, we go on to patiently endure the scorn and shame of being a Christian, remembering that we too at the end, can say: *"It is finished."*

The ministry of longsuffering is really a call to a ministry of prayer and so as you patiently endure, pray using the psalms. It is how you develop your "long passion" without getting angry at the Holy Spirit, when he tarries. Wait a little while saint. Stay hidden. You will soon go to Jerusalem, to Samaria, to Judea unto the ends of the world (Luke 24: 49, Acts 1: 8).

Let us pray.

How can I pray for you?

- You have never been saved and you are suffering. You seek to know God.
- You used to love the Lord. So you are his prodigal son and daughter and want to return to him, to suffer with him, that you may rise with him.
- You are faithfully serving him but have been discouraged during this season and so you are heavily burdened and want rest, to be restored.

Next steps

1. Choose 2-3 verses from the many I have shared, which one shall be your rock?
2. Tell us about how else the Lord has taught you to bear the fruit of longsuffering.

Notes

ⁱ See: <https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/ask-roger/reflections-on-psalm-22-the-messianic-psalm-of-the-cross.html>