

As we go through this series on character building blocks and look at the personal and community potential the Lord wishes to unlock and build up in us, with the fourth fruit of the spirit, we move away from the first category of the dynamic or positive gifts and move into those which deal more with how to respond or deal with things when we encounter resistance or friction during our pilgrimage from conception through the grave to our Father's home in glory.

The next aspect of the personal strength which the Lord wants to unleash in us is a word which is translated differently by a number of modern English translations. Sometimes it is translated as patience or as long suffering, or even as endurance and it comes from two different Greek words with related meanings.

The first word is **makrothumia**, from the combination of **makros**, which means long and **thumos** which means passion or indignation or sometimes even wrath. It refers to someone's ability to hold onto an idea or a position over an extended period of time without letting go or losing focus.

The second word is **hupomeno**, from **hupo**, which means under and **meno** which means to stay and refers to a joyful, hopeful endurance or patience which refuses to give up or quit or run away under pressure..

The one sense of the word we translate as patience or long suffering refers to the ability to hold onto something for a long time and the other sense means to stand up under something, also for a long time. So we are really dealing with a fruit of the spirit that can be viewed at least two ways – first as the ability to hang on to something for an extended period of time and second, the ability to stay under something, also for an extended period of time.

If we look at this desirable character ability further, we see that it is referring first to an inner reaction where we neither let our current situation tell us how to live nor how to think. This is because our motivation will come from an inner source of priorities and an inner source of strength and determination that we bring to any situation, instead of taking from that situation (makrothumia).

Next the Scriptures see it as the ability to be able to endure in a situation we neither want to be in nor are able to escape from and we have to hunker down and wait or resist and not cave in or quit (hupomeno).

I want to use the word patience as the English word which describes both aspects of makrothumia and hupomeno and I see patience as the ability to both be able to wait for something we want or need and which we do not yet have. I see it also as the ability to endure when something we do not want or do not need comes into our lives.

In fact patience may also be seen as the ability which believers need in this life to patiently wait for the coming of the next life, even if the kingdom does not arrive during our lifetime or during many lifetimes as the sad soap opera of history continues to unfold with all of its stupidity, cruelty and confusion.

The author of Hebrews says this to its readers this way:

“For you have need of patience in order that after you have accomplished the will of G-d you may obtain that which was promised, for in just a very little while, the One who must come will arrive and He will not delay. And my righteous one shall live by faith, but if he pulls back, I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith are are saved.”

Patience or perseverance (endurance) means that we do not give up on the Kingdom while we have to wait for it or when we encounter opposition or persecution that would want to blind us to it or make us forget about it.

I have been a believer for over forty years and I still believe as strongly and as passionately in the coming of the kingdom as I did when I first believed. I do not want to be like the camp of Israel which got tired of waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain and began to misbehave.

Do you find yourself getting tired of waiting for the kingdom to come or do you also find yourself getting impatient when the things you want to accomplish in your life are taking longer to happen than you expected?

It is kind of like our annual festival cycle. I know that every year we will have four sets of celebrations and I can hardly wait for them to happen and yet at the same time they seem to be taking forever to get here and then suddenly, it is time for Chanukah, it is time for Purim, for the Passover to Shavuot season and boom, the High Holy Days and Sukkoth are here once again – but why do they always seem to be taking so long to get here?

When I used to go to the annual UMJC conferences in the states, it would seem like conference time would never get here and then without warning it was next week or tomorrow and patience is needed not to get discouraged or distracted when you know that what is coming will eventually get here even if it seems to take forever.

Believers in the Messiah have been waiting for the kingdom for nearly two thousand years, and believers before the Messiah, like Abraham or Noah or Abel have been waiting even longer.

Patience helps us wait for that which we want because we know that our lives need to align themselves with G-d's timing and learn to be about His business and not become angry, or discouraged or bored with the waiting which all believers are called to endure.

But there is another application of patience we need to allow the L-rd to build into our lives and that involves waiting for the difficulties and deficiencies in our lives to resolve themselves so that we do not get tired of the nonsense we have to put up with and that doesn't seem to want to go away any time soon.

At different times in history, periods of great persecution have close to wiping out the community of believers, both Jews and Gentiles and for Jews the wandering and sojourning among the nations has at times almost seemed endless and ever so dreary and painful. Patience helps us huddle down in a bomb shelter and wait for another air raid to be over and it also helps us to rebuild our homes and lives after they have been smashed again by those who hate us and who actively work for our destruction.

My examples may seem to be a little extreme, given that we live in the lap of luxury in a part of the world where bombs and persecutions are not likely to happen any time soon, but even here, different kinds of personal or lifestyle bombs can go off without warning.

And both our faith in a supernatural G-d and our commitment to His righteousness are under an ever increasing persecution as we face constant pressure to abandon what we believe and abandon our moral values.

Few people are hostile to a belief in a higher power or in a greater purpose, but when you want to talk about creation and the flood and the exodus and the resurrection, billions of objections are raised.

Our faith is mocked and supposedly disproved and we are treated like we are both stupid and insane for actually believing in what the Bible says. And modern sexual ethics gets more challenging with each passing year.

We are told that what we do with our bodies is our own business and that it is cruel to judge anyone's sexual lifestyle or to challenge their right to end a child's life while they are in the supposed safety of their mother's womb.

We are being bombarded with all kinds of anti-spiritual and anti-biblical propaganda and we are being given so many negative labels and are being pressured into considering so many alternatives to our faith, that a little bit of persecution might be a nice change.

Societal peer pressure at every level of our society is intensifying and we need lots of patience not to let it cause us to lose our grip on either our faith or our morality as we watch our world dissolve into an international version of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sadly, even if this is not the kind of global village people thought they were building in the aftermath of those two global disasters, WWI and WWII, which nearly finished us off and which we are remembering over this long weekend.

Patience helps us not to lose sight of the coming kingdom and also helps us to hold on to our faith in that kingdom and in the ethics of that kingdom as we keep our lamps trimmed and filled with oil while we wait for the Groom's eventual arrival.

Patience means that we hold onto our passion for the kingdom (makrothumia), no matter how long it takes to get here. Patience also means that we hold up under pressure and don't quit or run away when we encounter resistance or persecution as we are waiting for the kingdom (hupomeno).

Patience also means we do not grow tired of waiting for the good things in our lives to come as we pass through the stages and ages of our lives and that we do not get bitter and angry when some of those things we know we deserve pass us by and go to those we know do not serve them. Patience also means that we do not have to have what we do not have in order to be happy and that we do not grow bitter and resentful with how things turn out in life, be they ever so good or ever so bad.

Patience also equips us to endure difficulties like sickness, unemployment, Canadian winters and watching the government we did not vote for make an even worse mess of things as life gets more expensive and clean air and safe drinking water become increasingly a memory of what we used to have but can no longer count on.

But there is also a feature of patience that has to do with the exciting and pleasant, positive things which can also wander through our lives and ambush us when we do not see them coming. People sometimes step up to the plate with help and resources we did not expect and good times can land on us with good friends and sometimes life seems to be so good that we don't have any more room for a single bite of the excellent dessert we are struggling to finish.

Patience knows that you can neither trust bad times nor good times to last or for them to come and go when we want them to or when we are ready for them to go or to start or to stop.

Sometimes we may find ourselves feeling like those little kids who don't want to come home from the park and who don't want to go to bed when there are so many toys and friends to play with. Patience doesn't get grouchy and discouraged when it comes time to clean up and put things away and say good night and patience doesn't want to draw out the good times and put off the chores that all of us have to do and that will not go away if we ignore them.

I enjoy a good time and I enjoy good company, but dishes do not wash themselves and sidewalks do not shovel themselves and sometimes we will be the grasshopper who wants to sing and play and at other times we will be that hard working ant who wants to prepare for the coming of winter. Patience kind of protects the love and the joy and the peace in our lives and helps us to see that all good things in this life must come to an end until that final day when His eternal good kingdom shall finally be here.

How is your patience doing? How is your makrothumia doing (enduring passion of His kingdom)? How is your hupomeno doing (ability to withstand and endure)? Are you letting the bad things that happen and the good things which do not happen decide how you should live and react?

Are you giving in to the increasing societal peer pressure that wants you to stop believing in the kingdom and to stop living by kingdom standards?

Are you getting tired of enduring those burdens in your life which you will have to live with for a long time yet? Are you keeping your wick trimmed and your lamp filled with oil as you wait for the Groom or is living for the kingdom something you will get to eventually, when you have a moment, because there are so many other more pressing things you want to deal with first?

We have need of patience so that we may obtain that which was promised, no matter how long it takes to get here. We have need of patience so that we do not grow weary and quit as we wander through any number of wildernesses and as we encounter any number of obstacles in our pilgrimage to the eternal promised land.

Are you learning to hang on that which we are called to hang on to? Are you also learning to let go of that which we are called to let go of as we patiently and sometimes joyfully slog through this life on our way to our true home in glory?

Let's pray.

Vayetzei And He Went Out Pursued and Protected

Torah: Gen. 28:10-32:2

(1) **28:15:** *Behold, I am with you and I will keep you wherever you go and I will bring you back to this country; for I will never abandon you until I have accomplished all that I said to you.* We are not promised an easy ride, but only one that will not end until He is finished with us and we have finished what He has given us to do.

(2) **28:22:** *This which I have set up as a monument shall be the house of G-d and I will give you the tithe of all you give me.* With nothing, Jacob saw great things coming in G-d and planned two things – to build a house for G-d and to pay his tithes. This means to make his faith in G-d permanent and to make his obedience practical and tangible.

(3) **30:41:** *Behold I have passed twenty years in your house; I served you 14 years for your two daughters and six years for your flock and you have changed my wages ten times.* It took a long time for the promises of G-d to become a reality in Jacob's life even amidst all the trickery and opposition he had to endure. What are you focused on, the opposition or the promises, neither will go away, but only one of them counts.

(4) **31:53:** *That the G-d of Abraham, and of Nachor, that the G-d of their father be a judge between us. Jacob swore by the one whom Isaac feared.* Four generations of faith were called on to bless and to protect. We must never neglect or minimize the generational calling of our faith, both backwards and forwards. It did not start with us and it should not stop with us.

Haftarah: Hos. 11:7-14:9

(5) **13:9:** *That which has caused your ruin, Israel, is that you have been against me, against the one who could have rescued you.* The history of Israel is a series of ups and downs, not because of the global demographics of the rising and falling of great empires and the moments of peoples that continue to affect our world, but because of their failure to know whose side they were on. Do you know whose side you are one?

(6) **14:2:** *Bring words with you and return to the L-RD. Say to Him: forgive all our iniquities and receive us favourably. Instead of bulls, we offer to You the homage of our lips.* Ceremony is important, but only as a means to express and remember the truths it teaches. If the truths of G-d are not real in our lives, all that we do is just going through empty motions. It is really time to get real in the L-rd and to stay real in Him.

Brit Chadashah: Jn. 1:19-51

(7) **1:51:** *And He said to him, truly, truly, after this you shall see the heavens open and the angels of G-d going up and descending above the Son of Man.* Just as Jacob's life was determined by angelic activity, so was the ministry of our L-rd. Our lives can benefit from this invisible spiritual support if we walk with the Saviour and place ourselves where His blessings will flow – faith in His promises and obedience to His Word.

Psalm 3 (Patti, pp. 83, 85) **Jewish Hero:** Marvin Kramer