

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 6 September 2020. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Steps to Fruitfulness (Part 3)

2 Peter 1:6

One of my all-time favourite books is *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was written by the Baptist pastor **John Bunyan** in the late 1600's. This book is an allegory of the Christian life. At the beginning of the story, a character named Pilgrim, who lives in the City of Destruction, has a heavy burden on his back (which represents the guilt and conviction of sin). He desperately desires to rid himself of this burden; but he has no idea how to get rid of it. However, one day Pilgrim came into possession of a book (which represents the Bible); and in this book, he discovered that his City of Destruction was bound to be destroyed by fire from heaven one day, by the King of the Celestial City, whose laws the people of his town had defied. Pilgrim was filled with fear and when he learned this; but he didn't know how to escape.

Well, shortly after this, as Pilgrim was walking in a field, and reading his Book, and weeping, he met a man named **Mr. Evangelist**. Mr. Evangelist told him not only how he could have his burden removed, but also how he could escape the destruction of his city! He pointed Pilgrim to a place called Wicket Gate, on the other side of the plain. There, he said, he would find a man named **Mr. Goodwill**, who would direct him to the place where he can have his burden removed. Also, he said that Mr. Goodwill would set him on the path to the beautiful Celestial City, where the King of the country lives. (Of course, the Celestial City represents heaven; and the King is God.)

Well, after many perils and distractions, which nearly turned him off the path, Pilgrim finally came to Wicket Gate. Mr. Goodwill (who represents the Lord Jesus Christ) met him there, and set him on a straight and narrow path. He said that this path would lead him to a hill called Calvary, at the top of which was a cross. Mr. Goodwill promised that when he reached the cross, his burden would fall off his back. (This represents salvation, and the removal of sin.) However, he said that on the way to Calvary, he must first stop at the house of a man named **Mr. Interpreter**, who would show him excellent things. (This Mr. Interpreter represents the Holy Spirit, who helps sinners to understand spiritual things.)

Well, Pilgrim came to the house of this Mr. Interpreter; and Mr. Interpreter graciously received him. Mr. Interpreter then took Pilgrim on a tour through the many rooms in his house. In these rooms, he saw people doing little "enactments," or "plays," which illustrate spiritual truths. In one of these rooms, Pilgrim saw two boys, whose names were **Patience and Passion**. Here is the scene that followed:

"I saw, moreover, in my dream, that the Interpreter took [Pilgrim] by the hand, and had him into a little room, where sat two little children, each one in his chair. The name of the eldest was Passion, and the name of the other Patience. Passion seemed to be much discontented; but Patience was very quiet. Then Christian asked, 'What is the reason of the discontent of Passion?' The Interpreter answered, 'The Governor of them would have him stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have all now: but Patience is willing to wait.'

Then I saw that one came to Passion, and brought him a bag of treasure, and poured it down at his feet, the which he took up and rejoiced therein, and withal laughed Patience to scorn. But I beheld but a while, and he had lavished all away, and had nothing left him but rags.

Then said Christian to the Interpreter, ‘Expound this matter more fully to me.’ So he said, ‘These two lads are figures: Passion, of the men of this world; and Patience, of the men of that which is to come; for as here thou seest, Passion will have all now this year, that is to say, in this world; so are the men of this world, they must have all their good things now, they cannot stay till next year, that is, until the next world, for their portion of good. That proverb, ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush’, is of more authority with them than are all the Divine testimonies of the good of the world to come. But as thou sawest that he had quickly lavished all away, and had presently left him nothing but rags; so will it be with all such men at the end of this world.’

As we have seen in our study of **2 Peter 1**, there are some spiritual qualities that God wants to develop in every Christian’s life. First, God wants us to have **faith**. Before you can have any other spiritual quality, you must first place your faith in Jesus Christ to save you. Then, after you are saved, you must *grow* in faith in your daily Christian life. As your faith grows, you should then add the quality of **virtue**. You should then add on **knowledge** of God’s Word. You should then add on **temperance** (self-control).

However, there is more. This morning, we will examine two more spiritual qualities that we should be “adding on”: **patience** and **godliness**. The title of this message is *Steps to Fruitfulness (Part 3)*.

Read 2 Peter 1:5-6.

I. Fifth step to fruitfulness: Patience

Patience is a quality that every Christian needs more of! Whether it be expressed in open anger, unkind words, or a bad mood, an *impatient* spirit can take over very quickly!

Now, most people would say, “Yes, I know that I shouldn’t be impatient; but, after all, I’m human. Things happen, and we lose our patience.” To be sure, we *are* human; and we do have a sinful nature; and we *do* face circumstances that test our patience. However, Christ is greater than our circumstances; and His power is greater than the power of sin. The Lord promises Christians, “***Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you*** (that’s the Holy Spirit), ***than he that is in the world*** (Satan)” (**1 John 4:4**). Patience *is* attainable through the mighty power of Jesus Christ; and God wants us to practice it.

Now, as we’ve seen in the last couple sermons, all these spiritual qualities build upon each other. The last spiritual quality that we studied was **temperance** (putting things of this life in their proper place). How, then, does having temperance prepare you to exercise the quality of patience? It’s simple. If you look at things of this life as fleeting and vanishing away, and as not worthy of clutching onto too tightly, then you will be patient as you endure the trials of this life. By the way, this attitude will have a profound affect in your relationships. For example, **1 Corinthians 13:4** Paul says, “***Charity suffereth long, and is kind.***” That’s just another way of saying, “True love is *patient*.” True love suffers long with people. Patience will make all the difference in your marriage. It will keep your marriage not only intact, but thriving! In families; in churches; in relationships with friends; in our witness for Christ; and in every area of life, patience makes all the difference. A Christian who exercises patience is able to show the character of Christ in a way that is attractive to everyone around him.

I would like to point out some other important truths about patience. First of all, **patience is linked with hope**. They’re like two sides of the same coin. If you have the one, you’ll have the other. The Apostle Paul makes this point in **Romans 8**, as he talks about the resurrection.

Read Romans 8:22-25.

According to these verses, a Christian's hope in the resurrection motivates him to be patient. If you be filled with hope that you will one day receive a new, immortal, sinless body like Christ's, then you will consider the Resurrection Day to be worth waiting for, with patience. You will consider the pains, sorrows, and heartaches of this life to be of little importance. Why? Because you know that very soon, Christ will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. At that moment, whether your body lie dead in the grave, or whether you are still living, you will instantly receive a new body, and will spend eternity with Christ. That glorious moment of the Resurrection is worth every trial we must endure until then.

Patience and hope are inseparable. In fact, in **1 Thessalonians 1:3**, Paul commended the Thessalonians for their "*patience of hope*." Did you catch that? Patience is the *product of* hope! Are *you* full of hope, Christian? Do you have your eyes fixed on that which you cannot see now? If so, then you will also have **patience** as you wait for it.

Patience is linked with love. It is the product of hope. But that's not all. Patience **is necessary in order to bring forth spiritual fruit**.

Read Luke 8:4-15.

There are a couple kinds of "fruit" that God wants us to bring forth. First, God wants us to bring forth the fruit of *godly character traits*— things such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (**Galatians 5:22-23**). (These nine character traits are called "*the fruit of the Spirit*.") Praise is a quality that pleases God, as well. In **Hebrews 13:15**, Paul refers to praise as "*the fruit of our lips giving thanks*" to God.

What other kind of fruit does God want us to produce? He wants us to produce the fruit of *souls that have been saved* because of our witness for Christ. I believe that this is the kind of fruit that Jesus especially had in mind in His parable, when He said that the good ground brought forth "*fruit with patience*." God wants us to bring forth the fruit of souls for Him; but it *must* be done "*with patience*." We must remember that people's hearts are hardened and blinded by sin; and any time you are trying to win a lost person to Christ, it will require lots of patience. It will require that you continue to pray for that person when it seems that nothing is getting through to him. It requires that you continue to witness to people even when they get angry with you, and insult you. It requires that you be patient with the lost, even when it seems that the devil has them in a death grip from which they will never break free. Jesus was patient with *you* as He waited for *you* to come to Him for salvation; and He expects us to be patient as we try to bring others to the Lord.

This brings me to another important truth about patience. We need to know what the *motivation* for patience is. Ultimately, **patience is motivated by the coming of the Lord**.

Read James 5:7-8.

In **Romans 8**, we saw that our hope in the promise of the resurrection produces patience. The same is true about the promise of the coming of the Lord. The promise of the Lord's return produces patience in us. That is what James is pointing out here in **James 5**. Actually, the resurrection will happen at the same time as the coming of the Lord; so **Romans 8** and **James 5** are talking about the same event. The only difference is that in **Romans**, Paul is focusing on the hope of the *resurrection of our bodies*--whereas here in **James**, James is focusing on our hope of *seeing the Lord*. He says that our waiting for the return of the Lord is like a farmer's waiting for the harvest. What does a farmer do while he's waiting for the harvest? He keeps working. He keeps doing exactly what he should be doing. He begins by ploughing and seeding his field, at exactly the right time. Then, he must continue to pull weeds, water the crops, and make sure that they are getting nutrients. Then, at harvest time, he is prepared to bring in the crop at just the right time. Should he *not* be ready to bring in the crop quickly, and at the right time, he may lose the crop entirely. All this requires *patience*.

So it is with waiting for Christ. We long to see Him face to face; but until the day when He appears in the clouds, we have work to do for Him. We cannot put it off. We must patiently do every task day by day, and keep our mind and eyes on the Lord. Is this your mindset, Christian? Do you constantly think about the coming of Christ, and look forward to seeing Him? If your eyes be fixed on Him, then you will labour with patience until He returns—even when your work for God seems dull, and weary, and fruitless. Just as crops grow slowly and silently, so the Lord is slowly, silently working in the hearts of the lost; and He knows exactly what He is doing. Just keep watching for His coming, and patiently sowing the seed of God's word in people's hearts.

What else do we need to know about patience? We need to realise that **patience is an important part of forgiveness**.

Read Luke 17:3-4.

Forgiveness is an extremely important godly character trait. Every Christian should practice it. It is *God's* heart to forgive undeserving sinners. It is *God's* character to forgive those who repent. This should be our heart, and our character, as well. God wants His children to be like Him. He expects us to forgive not only our friends (who are easy to forgive), but even our enemies. **Ephesians 4:32** says, "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*"

Now, if forgiveness be this important, one may wonder: "Why didn't God include forgiveness in this list of spiritual qualities in **2 Peter 1**?" It's simple: He didn't have to include it! If you think about it, forgiveness is part and parcel of **patience**. Forgiveness is *included in* patience. How can you be forgiving without also being longsuffering and patient? You can't. To have the one, you must have the other.

So then, what do you do when your wife, or your husband, or your mom, or your dad, or your brother, or your sister, or your employer, or your friend, or your brother or sister in Christ, offends you? Well, you first go to that person and rebuke him (you let him know it wasn't right, and that it hurt you). However, even if he refuse to get it right, you must have an attitude of forgiveness in your heart, so that as soon as he *does* say, "I'm sorry, please forgive me," you can sincerely forgive him on the spot. You must also be ready to forgive him when

he offends you again—because he probably will! Be ready to forgive 490 times, if necessary! When Peter asked, “*Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?*” Jesus’ answer was, “*I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven*”! By the way, Jesus doesn’t mean, “You can stop forgiving at offence 491.” He means, “Keep on forgiving”! This kind of relentless forgiveness takes **patience**.

Remember the parable that Jesus told in **Matthew 18** of a lord who forgave his servant of an enormous, unpayable debt? What did the servant ask for? He said, “*Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*” And what did the lord do? Not only did he have patience: he had *compassion*, and forgave him. He wrote off the debt completely, because he knew that there was no way that the servant could pay it. So it is with the God’s forgiveness of a sinner. God is not merely patient; He forgives. He isn’t patiently waiting for the sinner to *pay off* his debt, because there is *no way* that any of us could pay our debt of sin by any amount of good works. Rather, God is patiently waiting for the sinner to come to Him, and admit that he *can’t* pay his debt, and *ask Him for forgiveness*.

Because God is patient, He is forgiving. Forgiveness and patience go together. Are you practicing forgiveness in your relationships—in your marriage, in your family, in your workplace, in your church, in your school, and in every relationship that you have?

There is one more important truth that we need to know about patience. We need to realise that **patience is a sign of spiritual maturity**.

Read James 1:2-4.

If you have godly patience, then according to James, you are spiritually “*perfect and entire,*” and lacking in nothing. By the way, the word “perfect” does *not* mean “sinless.” You will never be without the sin nature while you are in this mortal body. However, you *can* be “entire.” You *can* be fully equipped to live a godly life. Now, perhaps you are thinking, “What about the other spiritual qualities that we need? Isn’t it possible to have those qualities, yet not have much patience?” To an extent, perhaps; but without patience, the other qualities are greatly lacking. Remember, patience is linked to forgiveness. It’s linked to hope. It’s linked to faith. It’s linked to love. If you have patience, then you will have all these other qualities, as well. However, if you *lack* patience, then you are lacking a vital component of all these other spiritual qualities. If you do not have patience, you will *not* have them, either.

How is your patience, Christian? Are you allowing Christ to develop this quality in your life?

II. Sixth step to fruitfulness: Godliness (vv. 6-7)

(Read verses 5-6 again.) The next step to spiritual fruitfulness is **godliness**. What is godliness? Godliness is having character that is like God’s character.

Now, in what way should our character resemble God’s character? In *every* way! God wants us to imitate every aspect of His moral character. “But, Pastor, isn’t there a way we can narrow that down a little bit?” I believe we can. You see, there is something that forms the foundation of all godliness: and that is **truth**.

Read Titus 1:1.

Please look closely at the last words of this verse. Paul says, “***the truth which is after godliness.***” This means, “the truth, which is *of a godly nature*.” Truth is, by its very nature, godly. Truth and godliness cannot be separated. Truth will always produce godliness. If you cling to truth, then you will have godliness in your life. If you cling to *lies*, or to a perverted truth (which is still a lie), then that lie will produce *ungodliness* in your life.

Let’s look at an example of what happens when a truth is perverted into a lie.

Read Matthew 7:1-5.

In **verse 1**, Jesus stated a simple truth. He said, “***Judge not, that ye be not judged.***” Jesus is saying that God will judge you in the same way that you judge others. Now, this is not hard to understand. Yet, many Christians today have twisted this truth around, and have given it a false meaning. According to many Christian teachers, Jesus is saying that “It is wrong to point out when someone is sinning, or teaching a false doctrine. Don’t confront people’s faults. If you do, you’re being ‘judgmental,’ ‘critical,’ and ‘unloving. You’re ‘kicking the wounded.’ Just let that person go on in his sin, and don’t say anything about it. God will deal with him.”

Folks, this is *not* Jesus’ meaning. To say that “judge not” means “don’t confront sin” is to turn the truth into a lie. Jesus commanded us to “***Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.***” In **Galatians 6:1** Paul says, “***Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.***” Jesus didn’t say, “Ignore sin.” He said, “Confront it—*after* making absolutely sure that *you* are right with God, and that *your* sins are confessed.” He said, “Make sure that you take the beam out of your *own* eye; and *then* go and help your brother to take the moat out of his eye.” We *must* confront sin; but as we do so, we must do it humbly, so that we don’t get haughty, and fall into a snare ourselves.

The “battle cry” of many churches today is “Judge not!” Yet, instead of putting this verse in its full context, they wrongly interpret it to mean, “Don’t confront sin. Don’t separate from the world. After all, we need to stay ‘relevant’ to the unchurched.” Many churches profess to uphold right doctrine; yet they refuse to discipline gross sin right in their midst. They talk a good talk; but they refuse to separate from worldly practices, or from churches that teach false and dangerous doctrines. Preachers used to preach *against* ungodly programs on the telly, and *against* ungodly music, and *against* social drinking, and *against* smoking, and dancing, and gambling, and immodest clothing. There was a time when, instead of getting offended by such preaching, Christians repented of their worldliness, and got their hearts right. Revivals broke out, and souls were saved, and churches grew. I still remember bonfires that my home church occasionally had when I was little, in which teenagers burned their Rock records, and other worldly things. My pastor wasn’t afraid to say that “Rock music is the devil’s music!”

Yet, how the winds have changed! Now, the devil’s Rock beat has been woven right into our so-called “sacred music”; and everyone is getting into the groove. Tragically, we now live in a day when Christians who dare to say that it is *wrong* to watch Hollywood’s movies and sitcoms, or to listen to worldly music, or to be involved in “social drinking,” or to dress immodestly, or to mix the devil’s music with Christian lyrics, are called “Pharisees” and

“judgmental.” Jesus’ true statement **“Judge not, that ye be not judged”** has been twisted into the lie that “You don’t dare tell anyone that he is doing wrong.” And what is the result? Ungodliness! This mindset *always* leads to a relaxation of morals in the church. It *always* leads to acceptance and tolerance of sinful habits, and destroys zeal for the Lord. It *always* leads to acceptance of flagrantly false doctrine. In time, it leads to complete apostasy. If you would be godly, Christian, you must adhere to the truth of God’s Word!

What are some hindrances to godliness? Lies are definitely the enemy number one! However, this is not the only enemy. Another enemy of godliness is **love of money**.

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

Love of money *always* stunts godliness. By the way, Paul didn’t say, “Money is the root of all evil.” He said, “The *love* of money is the root of all evil.” There’s nothing wrong with money. There’s nothing wrong with saving money, and planning ahead, so that we can take care of our families. However, we shouldn’t *love* money, and clutch onto it. If you start to love money, you’re heading for trouble. Love the Lord! Keep your eyes on Him!

This leads me to the most important truth about godliness. We need to know the *Source* of godliness.

Read 1 Timothy 3:16.

According to this verse, the **“mystery of godliness”** is **“God manifest in the flesh.”** In other words, the **“mystery of godliness”** is Jesus Christ. *He* is **“God manifest in the flesh.”** Jesus Christ is literally godliness incarnate, because He is *God incarnate*. He *is* Godliness. He isn’t merely the *Model* of Godliness: He is the *Source* of godliness. No one can produce true godliness without entering into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only when you are saved that you are given the divine power to live a godly life. A lost person may have an *appearance* of godliness; but he can’t have true godliness. Let’s look at one last Scripture.

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

In these verses, Paul gives us a long list of sinful characteristics of people who would live in the last days. Some are described as **“covetous,”** some as **“boasters,”** some as **“disobedient to parents,”** some as **“traitors,”** some as **“lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”** However, the one thing that all these sinners have in common is that they have a **“form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.”** Now, that’s an interesting statement. *What* is the **“power thereof”**? *What* is the power behind godliness? It is the Lord Jesus Christ! There can be no true godliness without being “in Him.” Those who don’t know Christ may have some “good” qualities; but they do not have the power to produce *true* godliness, because they don’t have Christ. On the other hand, those who *have* placed their faith in Christ have all the power they need to live godly lives. Christian, live by Christ’s power. Live unto godliness!

Conclusion: Are you adding these spiritual qualities to your life, Christian? Are you growing in patience? Is your life characterised by true godliness—the kind that proceeds forth from Jesus Christ, and not from your own fleshly efforts? In closing, I would also ask: **Are you truly saved?** Have you received forgiveness of sins by placing your faith in Christ? You can’t pay off your sin debt. Your debt

had to be paid by the blood of Christ; and He has *already* paid it. However, you must choose to *receive* His purchase for you, by simple faith and repentance of heart. Won't you receive Him today?