

God's Anger Control
Colossians 3:12
11-2-2025

As I stated last week, the best way to understand the spirit filled and spirit led life is not by the gifts of the Spirit like tongues and miracles, but rather by the fruit of the Spirit.

one of the passages where this is most evident is found in Galatians 5:16-26 where Paul describes the Spirit filled life.

In just 11 short verses Paul tells us to walk by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, live by the Spirit, and keep in step or be guided by the Spirit.

He states that as we walk and are led and live and keep in step with the Spirit, we will be displaying the fruit of the Spirit which he says is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

the Spirit filled life and the fruit, therefore are about our character and what type of people we are because Jesus has come into our lives

as Dallas Willard pointed out, trees and plants manifest their nature in their fruit; figs by bearing figs and not grapes. And what people do, reveals the kind of person they really are.

We are to be a reflection of our Lord as evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit.
Which brings us to the 4th in Paul's description of the fruit of the Spirit.
spirit filled and led people are patient

Ralph Milton wasn't getting off to a very good start that day. He was startled out of his sleep at 5:00 AM one morning by a noise that sounded like someone on his roof pounding on a trash can. Still in his pajamas, he went out in his backyard to investigate. He found a woodpecker was hanging on his TV antenna pounding away on the metal pole.

Angry at the little creature who had ruined his sleep, he picked up a rock and threw it at the bird. Up the rock sailed right over the bird, over the antenna, over the house, and out of sight. Then he heard the loud crash as it hit his car's windshield.

Now in utter disgust, his temper flared and his anger got the best of him as he took a vicious kick at a clod of dirt. Only then, too late, did he realize it wasn't a clod of dirt but a rock that he was kicking. And he was still in his bare feet.

Uncontrolled anger often brings its own rewards, almost always to our great detriment.

"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." (James 1:19-20)

It's not that it's always wrong to get angry, there is a time and place for it.

God himself expresses his anger in the Old Testament towards injustice and those who abused the poor and vulnerable and outsiders.

Jesus got angry when he saw the self-righteousness, hypocrisy and callousness of people towards those in need and hurting.

There are some things in this fallen world which should make us angry

Eph. 4:26 even says to be angry yet do not sin – don't let it control you

It's not anger per se, but uncontrolled anger that is wrong.

Angry people make poor decisions, we overreact and lash out without thinking, say things we don't really mean, hurt those closest to us

It's dangerous not just to us but those around us

Athletes understand the effect anger can have even on their game.

Norm Evans, former all pro tackle for the Miami Dolphins once confided, it's really dangerous for a pro football player to get angry. In fact, that's when linemen sustain their most serious injuries.

He went on to explain, Anger is so harmful in football that if I can get an opposing lineman angry at me, he will concentrate so much on beating me and forget to attack the quarterback—and that's my job, protecting the quarterback.

Mike Fuller, former safety for the Chargers agreed. He said the wide receivers are continually trying to make us angry each time they come into our area, because they know that if they can upset us emotionally, they can fool us on the next play.

It's not just football. Bob Hutchins, former Judo champion and now a missionary in Mexico stated that he was just an above average Judo performer until he learned how to make his opponents angry. That's when he won the championship.

Have you ever noticed that when Paul describes life apart from God as opposed to life in the Spirit, anger and related characteristics often seem to head up his lists.

So in his description of life apart from the Spirit in Galatians 5:19-21, he includes hatred, conflict, jealousy, fits of rage, resentfulness, divisiveness and factionalism.

in 2 Cor 12:20 he warns of *"quarreling, jealousy and resentment, outbursts of anger, rivalry and factions, slander or speaking evil of others, gossip, arrogance and disorder."*

In Ephesians 4:31 he condemns *"bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."*

And in Colossians 3:8 he tells us to get rid of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice and slander

All his words could have easily been written last week

They seem especially relevant given current events where so many people seem so angry today, don't they?

Angry homes, angry politics, angry relationships, angry sports, angry talk shows and newscasts, subway stabbings and school shootings, vengeful movies and angry music, even angry churches
So many seem to have a giant chip on their shoulder, angry at somebody about something, and because they are so angry, they don't even try to listen to each other because they are so busy yelling.

And too often some of the worst offenders are those who are supposed to be our leaders

This, if nothing else shows how much the world needs the Lord and His people exercising the fruit of the Spirit which is patience, sometimes translated as longsuffering, literally being slow to anger
Which is what the word means in both the Greek and the Hebrew

After telling us to get rid of all anger, rage, malice and slander, Paul tells us in Colossians 3:12, that as God's chosen people who are holy and dearly loved, we are to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness AND patience instead

The spirit filled and led life is to be guided by patience

On theologian referred to patience as God's anger control. Patient people having a long fuse and short memory where irritants are concerned. Patient people are hard to provoke. Their temper can absorb a lot before they lose it.

And the only way to develop that ability is found in Christ and relationship with him. it comes through the working of the Holy Spirit within us growing his fruit.

As one pastor told his congregation, Patience comes as the Holy Spirit shifts us from our agenda to God's. From our goals and purposes to God's goals and purposes. From serving ourselves to serving God. From pursuing our own desires to pursuing the desires deep within the heart of God. God creates patience within us as we grow to trust that he is in control, that he alone has the power, and that there is great freedom in us letting go and allowing God to lead and guide and instruct and empower. We hang on through the battle because we know God has secured the victory. We hang on through the pain because we know that God can heal. We hang on through the dry, empty feelings because we know God has not abandoned us and will not abandon us. Patience comes as we learn the ways and times of God

Something very significant about being slow to anger, while we are told to be slow to anger in our relationship with others, **IN SCRIPTURE the term is only used to describe God who is by nature patient!**
No one else, not king nor prophets nor priest, not Moses or Abraham or David, is said to be longsuffering and slow to anger

just as is the case with all the fruit of the Spirit, when we talk about patience and being slow to anger, we are talking about the nature of God

Just as when we talk about love we are talking about God because God is love.
It's not something he has it is something he is.
it's a fundamental part of his nature and character.

So Paul says the fruit of the spirit, the evidence of God in our lives, is love.

Just as when we talk about joy we are talking about God because he is a joy filled God whom the Psalms repeatedly states, takes delight in his creation.

As with love, joy is not something he has, it is fundamental to who he is.

The fruit of the Spirit, the evidence of the Spirit in our lives, is joy.

And just as when we talk about peace, it is not something he does, it describes who he is, for he is repeatedly referred to as the God of peace and wholeness.

when we talk about peace, we are talking about God and His character.

So the fruit of the Spirit is peace.

And this is just as true of patience as well, when we talk about patience we are talking about God whose nature is patience and being slow to anger

And therefore, Paul tells us to clothe ourselves with patience – be slow to anger as our heavenly father is slow to anger

Only way that can happen is to draw near and get close to the one who can take away anger

Gordon MacDonald told about a Nigerian woman who was a physician at one of our countries better known teaching hospitals. After he spoke at a conference, she approached him and told him how much she appreciated what he had to say. She introduced herself using her American name and he asked, what is your African name. She immediately told him, it was several syllables long with a musical sound to it. What does your name mean, he wondered.

She answered, It means child who takes anger away.

When he asked why her parents had given her the name she said, My parents had been forbidden by their parents to marry. But they loved each other so much they defied their family and married anyway. For several years both their families were so mad, they were ostracized from both. Then she said, my mother became pregnant with me. And when my grandparents held me in their arms for the first time, the walls of hostility came down. I became the one who swept the anger away. And that's the name my mother and father gave me.

The name is also a good description of Jesus.

As we are soon to head into the Christmas season, we remember and celebrate the one born in the manger to turn aside Gods anger by taking away our sin

He is the child who takes away God's anger.

He replaces it with patience, for our God is a patient God.

And when we take on the name of Christ follower, it is expected we take on his character as well, which means growing the fruit of the Spirit which is patient

Or as Paul told the Colossians we are to rid ourselves of anger, rage and malice...and instead as God's chosen people who are holy and dearly loved, we are to cloth ourselves with...patience

Our God is a patient God
It is how he is often identified in the Old Testament

When God first revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6, he declared himself as, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God who is slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness.

In Numbers 14 when the people of Israel rebelled in the wilderness. It says Moses called to the Lord and prayed for his people asking the Lord to act according to his name and his nature which he declared in :18, **the Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love.**

In recounting the mighty acts of God, Nehemiah 6 declares that he is **a God who is forgiving, gracious and compassionate. For he is slow to anger and abounding in love**

The prophet Joel reminded the people of Gods patience when he said in Joel 2:13, **Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, therefore he relents from sending calamity.**

And Jonah didn't even like the fact that by nature, God is patient.
he got angry with God for sparing Nineveh stating, **Lord is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love. A God who relents from sending calamity.**

Our God is a patient God.
It's part of his makeup, who he is and what he is like and therefore it is to come to describe us as well.

if your picture of God, like so many, is of an angry, vengeful God, it needs to be seriously revised.

He goes out of his way to express his care for you to the point where he even sent his own son to turn aside his anger and bring you forgiveness

He is a God who is slow to anger and abounding in love

So as with Love, joy, and peace, as we talk about patience, we are talking about the character and nature of God.

He is longsuffering and slow to anger
The fruit of the Spirit, Paul said, is patience.

Be like your father and clothe yourselves with His patience

I read a story about a kindergarten teacher on the mainland who was helping one of her children put on his boots. They worked together pushing and pulling and tugging. It seemed like they'd never get the boots on him. They just didn't seem to want to go on. When they were finally able to get the second boot on, the boy looked up at her and said, teacher, they're on the wrong feet.

She looked and sure enough, they were. It wasn't much easier getting them off then it had been getting them on. But through it all she managed to keep her cool as they worked

together to get the boots back on—this time on the right feet. Then just as she thought they were done, the boy announced, teacher, these aren't my boots.

She literally bit her tongue and controlled herself as she asked, why didn't you say so? He merely shrugged as she once again struggled to help him pull the ill-fitting boots off.

Then he said, these are my brothers' boots. My mom made me wear them today.

This time the teacher didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. But she was able to muster up what grace and courage she had left to wrestle the boots off his feet one more time.

Then after they got them back on, she asked, now, where are your mittens?

He sweetly looked up and said, I stuffed them in the toes of my boots.

That's long suffering, a picture of what it means to be slow to anger, patience in the presence or repeated frustration

And that is a picture of how God acts towards you and I

And because that is how he acts towards us, Peter says his patience means our salvation

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

And again a few verses later

"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation." (2 Peter 3:15)

And in offering us salvation, he is offering us himself

His spirit to take up residence in us, planting seeds that grow into the fruit of His spirit of which patience is one

Therefore, as Colossians 3 says, rid yourselves of anger, rage, and malice...instead as God's chosen people who are holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with His patience.

And how we all need patience especially towards those who know just what to do to get under our skin

John Maxwell once wrote how he tries to put his own anger into suspension. He said he does it on the golf course. He writes the name of the person he is tempted to get angry at on his ball, let's say his name is Ralph. He then tees him up, gets out his driver, and if the fairway is that way, he turns towards the woods and swings away. He said some of the finest golf shots he has ever made in his life involved sending Ralph into the woods. There's therapy about hitting him and watching him go into the woods never to be seen again. He said one day he was playing golf with his buddy and a guy had really been bothering him. So he wrote his name down, teed him up, faced the woods. At which point his buddy stopped him and said what are you doing, the fairways that way. I know, I know, was all he said. Maxwell had

decided this guy was not going to bug him anymore. Hasta la vista baby, and he said he hit one of the finest wood shots he had ever seen. It took off screaming out of that place. It went into the woods and hit the trees, which made him feel even better.

Then all of a sudden, the ball comes flying out of the woods, right back at him and landed at his feet. So he said he just reached down, picked him up, looked at him, kind of banged him around a little, then stuck him in his golf bag. Then he looked at his friend and said, You know, some people you just can't get rid of.

There are always going to be people like that.
People who get on our nerves and know how to get under our skin.
Circumstances that will try and test us but must not control us

It's not always easy, but still Paul says we are to be filled with the fruit of the spirit which is patience, slow to anger, longsuffering with others, clothed with patience, precisely because we know that is how God treats us

And the way to do it, as with all the fruit of the Spirit, is to draw near to God. Learn to walk and live, be filled and guided by His Spirit.

If you grow in him, the fruit will grow in you.