

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## The Spirit of Patience

by Dan Trygg

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are out-from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world...<sup>5</sup> They are out-from the world; therefore they speak out-from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are out-from God; the one who experientially-knows God listens to us; the one who is not out-from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

1 John 4:1,5-6

“Being empowered with all power, according to strength of His glory, for all endurance and patience...”

Colossians 1:11

“Put on then, ...holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.”

Colossians 3:12

“...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; bring-to-light, assess responsibility, come-alongside-to-encourage-or-exhort, with all patience and instruction.”

2 Timothy 4:2

“Love is patient...”

1 Corinthians 13:4

“The fruit of the Spirit is ...patience...”

Galatians 5:22

“...admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”

1 Thessalonians 5:14

“The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient-when-wronged...”

2 Timothy 2:24

The apostle John indicates that it is possible to “test” the spirits, to see whether they are out-from God, or from the world-system. The “spirits” mentioned in this context are those who are working through people. There are “false prophets” who are mouthpieces for the thoughts and influence of these spirits. Actually, the original language says, “Test the spirits if it is out from God.” Note the shift from the plural to the singular. **We are to be examining or evaluating all the spirits, one-by-one, to see if “it” is out from God. Why are we to evaluate them?** So that we can discern the spirit of truth from the spirit of error (deception, delusion, wandering, ‘leading-astray’, or ‘causing-to-be-mistaken’). John clearly tells us that **there are two sources of information, ...the world-system and God.** These two are opposed to each other. The world-system is controlled and influenced by Satan and his demonic servants. He “deceives the whole world”, and “the whole world lies in the evil one” (Rev. 12:9; 1 Jn. 5:19). **The false prophets are mouthpieces for the world-system.** They speak out-from the world, because they themselves are from the world. The world is what fills and occupies their minds, and influences their thoughts and behaviors. **We are “from God”. The Spirit of God is to fill and occupy our minds, and influence our thoughts and behaviors. We are to take care what we listen to, and what we allow to influence our minds and behaviors.** Even though we are born from above, and our true inner self is no longer of this world, we can still allow the spirits of this world influence our minds and behaviors. **We can unwittingly allow the enemy to influence and program our thinking.** If we allow him to do that, we will miss out on the privilege and power that belongs to us in Jesus Christ. We can get caught up in the message and propaganda of this world-system, and waste our lives here on temporal matters of little value. **Things of this world will keep us from pursuing the things of the eternal kingdom of God.** We will lose, or never discover, the potential that we have in Christ, and the enemy will keep us entrapped in the chaos, confusion and deception of this age.

**Thankfully, God has enabled us to discern the difference** between the Holy Spirit, and the fruit that comes from Him, and the fruit of these worldly spirits. **We can see the evidence in the lives of these “false prophets”,** those who are attempting to speak into our lives and influence us by their instruction, example, values, or advertising. **We can also recognize them by the effect that they are having upon us. We tend to become like whomever we follow. If we follow the world, ...the desires of the flesh, the allurements of the eyes, and the things that the world takes pride in..., we will soon notice that the attitudes and behaviors of the world will become apparent in our lives, ...even as they are in the lives of others who are pursuing the influence of the world-system. If we are actively and effectively following Christ, we should see the attitudes and behaviors of His heart and character becoming evident in our lives.** We should be able to recognize this both *in outward expression* in our interactions with situations and people, ...and we should be able to notice *an inward change in our own inner emotional state.* If we can recognize the false prophets by their “fruit”, we should also be able to look at the “fruit” of our lives to see what “seeds” we are planting in them.

We have already talked about how we should be seeing the *agapē*-love of God, the peace of Christ and the joy of the Holy Spirit becoming more evident in our hearts and our interactions with others. These are three aspects of what the Spirit will produce within us, and express through us, as we abide in Him. **Today, we are going to talk about the unusual patience that is the outworking of the life of God’s Spirit within us.** In Paul’s description of the *agapē*-love of God in 1 Corinthians 13, the first attribute he listed was “patience”. Galatians 5:22 lists this as one of the aspects of the “fruit” of the Spirit in our lives. In Colossians 1:11, Paul prayed for these new believers that they might “walk worthily of the Lord unto every pleasing thing, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the true knowledge of God, being empowered in all power according to the strength of the radiant-glory of God unto all

endurance and patience with joy...”. Clearly, “patience” is to be an outworking or “fruit” of the power of God at work in our lives. We are not told to simply “be patient”. We are told to pray for the enabling power of God to work in us to produce patience. “Patience” is an outworking of God’s activity within us. It is a by-product of His life in us.

**What is “patience”?** In the NT Greek language, the word is *makrothumia*, a compound word from *makros* (meaning “remote, far off, distant”) and *thumia* (a rushing or violent wind; angry heat or hot passion boiling up; agitation). **It means “far off agitation or anger”.** It reminds me of the Hebrew phrase “slow to anger” (Ex. 34:6). The literal Hebrew means “long of nostrils”. It is a word picture that would have been very meaningful to herdsman. It is a reference to the snort of an angry, rage-filled bull. To be “long of nostrils” means that the explosive anger is far off, at a distance. The Greek Septuagint translation rightly used *makrothumia* to render the phrase into Greek. The boiling up of anger is at a distance. The root, *thumia*, refers to more than simply an angry outburst, however. It describes the sudden rise of any anger, passion, irritation, frustration, or strong emotion. Thus, **the word means “tolerance, forbearance, or emotional quietness in the face of unfavorable circumstances”.** It is calmness, patience and constraint in the face of provocation or misfortune. **It is remaining steadfast and constant, without complaint or irritation, when encountering trouble, inconvenience, or even attack.** It is being slow to rise up in agitated self-defense, or to respond in kind to hostile assaults. The King James Version used the phrase “long suffering” for this word. Sometimes there is a “suffering” component, but **the main idea is the steady, calmness of heart and spirit, and the measured restraint instead of reprisal or retaliation.** The opposite of patience would be irritation, agitation, complaint, anger, frustration, defensiveness, snapping back, or blowing up. Some of these reactions are only felt internally, while others are clearly noticeable to others.

**Where does “patience” come from?** As we have said, **this kind of calmness of spirit comes from the Source of calmness and steadiness Himself, ...from God.** Because it is an inner-working of the Spirit of God, this patience can come in two ways. **Sometimes, the Spirit will simply fill us with an inner calm and steadiness that we ourselves recognize as being a gift from Him.** This is a manifestation of His grace that supersedes, and lifts us above, our normal emotional reaction to a difficult situation. It is “grace gift” from Him. **Most of the time, however,** God doesn’t merely want to lift us above our natural emotions. **He desires to establish our hearts and emotions in a consistent walk of trust with Him, where His steadiness and graciousness is our own experience.** He gives us the capacity to be at rest inside so that, when circumstances or people seem to come against us, we are deeply rooted in Him, and can remain calm.

**How can I learn to grow in patience?** It is important for us to recognize that patience is both an empowered ability that comes from abiding in Christ, and is also part of my choice to grow in my spiritual walk. **There is a partnership here, ...an experiential learning curve and growth in the grace of trusting in God.** There is learning to put aside the irritation and desire to retaliate, and put on the kindness, humility, meekness and patience that come from Christ. **We may still feel some of those same agitated emotions, especially at first,** because our emotions arise from our perception of things. **When we learn to trust in God’s care, however, we can process those emotions, put them aside, and learn to put on the graciousness and patience of the life of Christ** (Col. 3:12). We can step out of “self-defense mode” and choose to allow the Spirit to work through us with calmness of heart and forbearance. **As we go through these experiences, we will become more attuned to the heart of the Spirit, and His fruit will be established more and more in us.** Our hope, that we will become like Jesus and express His life, will become more consistently a part of our experience (Rom. 5:2-5). **We mature as we are “working together with Him”,** which includes going through the difficult experiences with faith, “bearing in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus can be made visible in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:6-12; 6:1-10). In this case, **we choose to die to the irritability and desire to retaliate, and we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit to fill us with the steadiness and calm that is Him.**

As you apply this principle of “testing the spirits”, **note first what is the fruit that is evident in the life of the person who is attempting to speak to influence you?** Is that person patient? Is he or she calm? From what you know of that person, would he or she seem to be a calm, steady, patient person, or someone who is demanding, irritable, complaining? “You will know them by their fruits,” Jesus said. That person’s mouth will speak out what is in their heart. Don’t take in the “seeds” of a tree that is clearly not a “good” or “healthy” tree. You will become like those you listen to. **Secondly, what is the effect of that person’s communication on you?** Is it positive, or does their communication agitate you? Does it cause you to notice the negative, think what is negative, and speak what is negative? Does that person’s communication lead you to draw near to God, or direct you away from Him? Does it make you more emotionally geared up, or emotionally more stable? **Thirdly, how much time are you giving to this influencer?** It is the nature of these “false prophets”, these people that the enemy uses to influence us, to draw us in. They are smooth communicators, entertaining, convincing, and try to persuade you that you *need to hear* what they have to say. Ask yourself, “Has *my life* really changed for the better, because I listen to this person?”

**Finally, we are to be a people of unusual patience.** Can you say that about yourself? **Are you willing to do what it takes to become like Jesus, to walk in love (which is patient), and bear the fruit of the Spirit (which is patience)?**