

Every Good Tree

PATIENCE

Matthew 7:16-20

August 08, 2020

We are a society in a hurry. We want what we want and we want it yesterday, so we have:

- Microwaves – great invention to reduce cooking times, but now we tap our fingers because it's not fast enough.
- Highspeed internet
- Highspeed rail
- Instant messaging and Instagram
- Fast food

We dislike anything that slows our frantic pace as we run through life:

- Standing in line --- hate that!!!
- The person in the cross walk --- **"walk a little faster!!"**
- The person driving "slow" in the fast lane --- **"get out of my way!!!"**
- You send a text – because it's faster than email – then get no response for 3 days..... **"come on – how hard can it be!!!"**
- The green light that turns yellow {2017 - 939 deaths caused by people running red lights - "Drivers who decide to run a red light when they could have stopped safely are making a reckless choice that puts other road users in danger," **David Yang – executive director AAA traffic safety**}

Eugene Peterson {A Long Obedience in The Same Direction}: One aspect of the world that I have been able to identify as harmful to Christians is the assumption that anything worthwhile can be acquired at once. We assume that if anything can be done at all, it can be done quickly and efficiently. Our attention spans have been conditioned by 30-second commercials....

The several Greek words translated into **"Patience"** can also mean - **persevere, longsuffering, abide, endure, fortitude, forbearance, mild, gentle, self-restraint and long to anger.**

Patience is not just the ability to wait, but our attitude while we are waiting.

To tell you the truth, patience is something I struggle with.....

It's strange, really... In some areas of my life I am very patient - I don't get upset if my plane is delayed – for example. And yet, you don't want to be in my way on the freeway, and one of my favorite sayings is, **"How hard can it be?"** spoken in an irritated voice and accompanied by lots of eye-rolling – clearly God has some work to do in me. Good thing He's patient!

God's Patience toward Us:

- **Exodus 34:6** - And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, abounding in love and faithfulness,
- **Psalm 86:15** - But Thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger** and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.
- **Romans 2:4** - Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and **patience**, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?
- **2 Peter 3:9** - The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is **patient** with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God chooses to walk at a pace we can walk.

When people read the Old Testament, they often come to the wrong conclusion that God was harsh and arbitrary and mean in His dealings with people. Yes, there was judgment and it wasn't pleasant, but judgment is not the same thing as being harsh, arbitrary and mean. The fact is --- God was incredibly patient – more patient than I would have been.

- Adam and Eve disobeyed – they hid – God went looking for them – **"where are you?"**.
- The people of earth were destroying themselves – God hired Noah to preach for **120 years** while building a boat big enough to carry anyone who **wanted** to get on.

- The Children of Israel chose to wander the desert for **40 years** – God wandered with them.

In Deuteronomy 28-30, Moses set before the Children of Israel the consequences of obedience and disobedience to God (as any good parent would do) – **BEFORE** they entered Canaan.

- **Deuteronomy 30:19-20** - This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. **Now choose life**, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. **For the LORD is your life**, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Not too many years later we read this:

- **Judges 21:25** - In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

I would have taken them out and started over..... But, do you know how many years it took before Israel was finally destroyed by Assyria? 688 – and that was only after they had completely rejected God.

How about Judah? 800 years. 8... HUNDRED... YEARS!

- **2 Kings 17:13-15** - The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." ¹⁴ **But they would not listen** and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the LORD their God. ¹⁵ **They rejected his decrees and the covenant** he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. **They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless.**
- **2 Chronicles 36:14-16** - Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ The LORD, the God of their fathers, **sent word to them through his messengers again and again**, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ **But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets** until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

So, if patience is a part of Who God Is – how then, should we be?

Exercising Patience in Circumstances and with People.

Have you ever lost your patience? I didn't think so.....

It is so easy to fly off the handle at the outside causes of our inconvenience isn't it? But listen to words of scripture:

- **Proverbs 14:29** - He who is **slow to anger** has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.
- **Ephesians 4:1-2** - I, a prisoner in the Lord, encourage you to live the kind of life which proves that God has called you. Be humble and gentle in every way. Be **patient** with each other and lovingly accept each other.
- **Colossians 3:12-13** - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience**. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
- **2 Timothy 4:1-2** - I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great **patience** and instruction.
- **James 1:19** - This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and **slow to anger**.

Every morning, noon and night there are plenty of good reasons to be impatient, but Christians are called to be as patient in unwanted circumstances and with other people as God **IS** with us.

Patience is not just something we should be exhibiting in our physical daily life. Patience also needs to be exercised in our spiritual life and it begins with **Exercising Patience with God.**

Sometimes God just doesn't move as fast as we'd like and we get frustrated because we want immediate action.

- We need patience when things are moving slowly.

Sometimes God asks us to do something but doesn't tell us why and we get frustrated because we want an immediate justification for His order.

Sometimes God does something and doesn't check in with us first to see if it's okay or if it's going to disrupt our lives in anyway and we get frustrated because He should know better.... I mean, really, **"how hard can it be?"**

- We need patience when we don't understand.

Sometimes it appears as though God isn't doing anything at all.....

- We need patience in times of great disappointment and in times of defeat and sorrow.
 - **Psalm 33:20-21** - We **wait in hope** for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. ²¹ In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

- **Psalm 37:7** - Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him....
- **Ecclesiastes 3:11** - He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.
- **Isaiah 25:9** - And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."
- **Isaiah 55:9-11** - For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹ So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.
- **Philippians 1:6** - being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
- **James 1:2-4** - Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patient enduring. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Exercising Patience with Yourself.

We struggle with sin and we get discouraged when we fall to the point of wanting to give up.

"Dear God, make me patient, NOW!!"

However, there are no short-cuts to holiness.

- **Steven J. Cole** – It is not difficult in such a world to get a person interested in the message of the gospel; it is terrifically difficult to sustain the interest. Millions of people in our culture make decisions for Christ, but there is a dreadful attrition rate. Many claim to be born again, but the evidence for mature Christian discipleship is slim. In our culture anything, even news about God, can be sold if it is packaged freshly; but when it loses its novelty, it goes on the garbage heap. There is a great market for religious experience, but there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.

The Christian life is not a hundred-yard dash --- it's an endurance race. Starting well is easy, finishing well is another matter. Perseverance and patience are required.

- **Colossians 1:10-12** - And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.
- **Hebrews 12:1** - Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance the race that is set before us,

Give yourself a chance to grow. Abiding is a slow word. You cannot rush a grape.

- **John 15:4-5** - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

PATIENCE is meant to be a hallmark of the Christian life – it is not an optional extra. However, **PATIENCE** does not come naturally and we have no ability to manufacture it through human effort.....

So how do we become patient people – patient in circumstances / with others, patient with God, patient with ourselves??

Allowing the Holy Spirit into our lives to guide and transform them. The Holy Spirit will not automatically operate in the life of a Christian. A transformed life only happens as we surrender to and cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

Choosing the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity for Victorious Christian living. Why? Because the power of a fruitful life does not lie with the believer, but with the Spirit. Just as an apple tree doesn't think about producing apples – it produces apples because it's an apple tree and because it's connected with the source of life, so it is with a believer. A believer doesn't **TRY** to produce righteous fruit. He produces fruit **BECAUSE** he is a believer and **BECAUSE** he is connected to his source of life --- the Holy Spirit.

- **Oswald Chambers:** Our only task is to maintain a vital connection with Jesus Christ, seeing that nothing interferes with it.

PATIENCE is produced by God's work in us --- it's a gift.

- **Galatians 5:22-23** - The **FRUIT** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, PATIENCE, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

PATIENCE is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives – transforming us into the image of Jesus.

Every Good Tree Produces ---- PATIENCE