

Sermon Notes – September 6, 2020
“Abiding in Christ – Growing in Patience”
(John 15:1-5, 8 and Galatians 5:22-23)

I want to talk a little bit this morning about patience. Patience is often said to be one of those virtues that few of us have – and how true that is. It is also in short supply today. If I were to ask you how patient you are on a scale from one-to-ten (with ten being the highest).. I won't ask you to answer right now, but let me ask you some questions. How do you deal with interruptions? Let's say you are in the middle of a project, a video game, or a movie and somebody interrupts you... How patient are you? How do you deal with inconveniences? You know, when you're in the express line at the grocery store, you have two items, the elderly lady in front of you has twenty, and she went through the wrong line... How patient are you? ...Or how about in the traffic going down the road? Have you ever noticed that you can come to a red light, the light turns green, and you haven't moved in two seconds ... what's going to happen? ... Horns are going to blow, somebody is going to give you the finger, or somebody's going to cuss you out. We are an impatient society, aren't we? How do you deal with irritations? ... Those little people that know how to push your buttons, irritate you, and get the best of you. Sometimes, it's somebody in your family, or your best friend, or a co-worker, or a neighbor, but they get the best of you and try your patience, don't they? Somebody said, “Patience is a virtue and few of us have it.” It's in short supply today.

But, did you know? ...And I want you to remember these things: **God is patient with us.** Patience is one of the fruits of the spirit. It is one of the by-products of abiding in Christ and staying close to God. It's one of those Christ-like characteristics that God wants us to show to the world that makes us distinctive from the world – patience with others, ourselves, and God. When you show patience, you are glorifying God because you are showing Christ's likeness and valuing others. Remember, God is patient.

How do you define patience? Well, some people would say that it's just waiting. Joyce Meyers, who is on TV, said, "Patience is not just about waiting. It's about having a good attitude while you wait." Somebody said, "Patience is just delaying your gratification for a longer period of time. It's just waiting." But, I like the one that says, "Patience is when you idle your motor but you feel like stripping your gears." I also want you to know that patience is also called longsuffering in the scripture. "Patience" and "Longsuffering" come from two Greek words: "macro" meaning long or slow - and "thumia" meaning anger (long-anger, slow-anger, not a short fuse, not short-tempered). So, patience is "slow to anger."

I want you to remember, as I said, that God is patient with us. Have you ever thought about that? Do you remember in the book of Jonah, he was called to go to Nineveh and preach to the Ninevites? The Ninevites were enemies of the Israelites. Jonah didn't want to go. In the story, he was thrown overboard, swallowed by a whale, (where he stayed for several days), thrown out of the whale, and then eventually, he went to preach to the Ninevites. They repented. They were a pagan, wicked people and Jonah didn't want to go to them because they were enemies to the Israelites. But, he preached to them and they turned to God. What happened was that Jonah got upset with God. He said, "God, I knew you were gracious and merciful and slow to anger (patient), and you would relent and forgive them." And God did. David, in the Psalms, often said, "God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger." -- He's patient. Simon Peter (in 2nd Peter) said, "To the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years, like a day. God is not slow to answer his promise. He is patient with you and me. He does not want anyone to perish, but ALL to come to repentance."

God is patient with you and me - and he wants us to be patient with others, with ourselves, and with Him. How does God teach us patience? He teaches us through people and through problems and trials. James, the half-brother of Jesus, said, "The testing of your faith produces patience." Most of us don't want to go through problems and trials, do we? None of us do. Now, I'm still having to learn that - to consider it joy

when you go through them. But, it says to consider it joy when you go through trials because God is going to mature you and grow patience within you. Do you remember the story of Job in the Bible? You remember how Satan wanted to test Job? He thought, “Okay, Job claims he is this faithful follower of God. He’s got everything – a wife, kids, grandchildren, possessions, money, and everything that life could offer him... I bet he wouldn’t stay Your disciple if I took all that away from him.” So, God lets Satan try Job – and Job loses all of that stuff. He even becomes stricken with leprous sores and boils. Job struggles and he is impatient. His friends desert him, except for two or three of them, and then they give him a hard time. At the end of that book, there is a dialogue between Job and God. What that dialogue is really saying (in essence) is, “Lord, I wouldn’t have learned what I learned about you if I hadn’t gone through these things. I wouldn’t have learned about my life and how to deal with difficulty, if I hadn’t gone through this.” James said the testing of your faith produces patience and perseverance – longsuffering.

Sometimes, God uses people to teach us patience, doesn’t he? I heard a cute story – a true Hebrew legend that never made it into the Bible. It talks about Abraham in the Old Testament. Abraham was sitting in his tent one day. He walked out and he saw this man coming toward him – an elderly man who looked weary from his journey. In Middle-Eastern hospitality, they invite the person in to spend the night and feed them. Abraham invites the man into his tent, washes his feet (which is customary Middle-Eastern hospitality), and has his wife put some food on the table. Guess what? The man sat down and started eating, but he never said a blessing. Abraham looked at him and said, “Sir, don’t you worship God?” The man said, “I don’t worship anybody. I worship fire. I have no reverence for anybody.” He kept eating – and all of a sudden, Abraham walked over, grabbed him up by the scuff of the neck, and pushed him out of his tent. God and Abraham had a conversation. God said, “Abraham, what happened to that stranger that was eating in your tent?” He said, “Lord, he doesn’t worship you so I put him out.” God said, “*Abraham, I have been patiently dealing with that man for eighty*

years and you mean to tell me that you couldn't be patient with him for one night?" Sounds just like us, doesn't it?

I heard a cute story about a kindergarten teacher in Seattle, Washington. She had a bunch of kids in her class. You know, it rains a lot in Seattle – and it was one of those days where it had rained all day. At the end of the day, the last bell rang and the teacher had to help the kids put on their galoshes (their rubber rain boots). She's helping them and gets all the boots on the kids. She gets to the last child and is having trouble getting the little girl's boots on. She pulls and tugs and pushes and moans and groans. When she finally gets them on, the little girl says, "These are not my boots!" The teacher has to push and pull and tug trying to get the boots back off. She said, "I don't know who's boots these are, but they are too small for your feet." She's griping and complaining. She finally gets them off, and guess what the little girl says? "These are my sister's boots, she just let me wear them today." The teacher put them on again. Trying your patience. Isn't it amazing that people are put in our pathway, in our experiences, to help us learn the fruit of patience? ***God wants us to learn to be patient with others and with ourselves because God is patient with us. If God is patient with us, we are to be patient with others and ourselves.***

I also want you to remember that when you are patient with somebody, you are saying to them that they're valuable. Sometimes, when we are so impatient with somebody, the little subtext that we're saying to them is, "I'm more important than you are. I'm more valuable than you are." Have you ever noticed when you go to Wal-Mart parking lot and you want that space right up there at the front, but somebody is taking their time to get out of that space? They got to put their groceries in – they have to put the child in the car – they are sitting there looking at the rear-view mirror, primping – and they finally back out. You are sitting there getting so impatient like, "Hurry up and get out of there! I've got to get into that space!" Sometimes, we have a tendency to say, "I'm more valuable than you are. I'm more important than you." ***Patience lets other people know that they are valuable. God values you and me. God is patient with us and he wants us to be patient with others and ourselves. When we***

exhibit patience, we are displaying that distinctiveness about Christ and it glorifies God.

Earlier in that book, I had you read John 15:1-5, 8. Did you notice in verse 8, God said, “If you abide in me and I abide in you, you will bear much fruit and you will show that you are My disciples.” He said, “The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, longsuffering, perseverance, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control.” Paul said, Clothe yourselves with patience... “And above it all, may love bind it all together.” When we show these characteristics to the world, they are distinctive marks that say that we are a disciple of Christ, and we glorify God.

I come back to that statement to you... How patient are you – on a scale of one-to-ten – with yourself, with others, and with God? God wants us to be patient with Him, and we don’t like to do that, do we? There are sometimes that we pray for something and we want it for so long – maybe we want a child, maybe we want to achieve a certain level of success, maybe we want our first house, a spouse, etc. – and God doesn’t seem to be answering. Why not? Maybe God is trying to develop us more into the persons that He created us to be. Remember when it said a day is like a thousand years to God and a thousand years are like a day? Isaiah, the prophet, said, “For my ways are higher than your ways. My thoughts are higher than yours.” ***God has a purpose for all that is going on with us, but He’s trying to spiritually mature us.*** He said, “If you abide in me, and I abide in you, the same will bring much fruit. For without Me, you can do nothing eternally of value. When you bear fruit, you show that you are one of my disciples.”

How do we abide in Christ? ... Make a moment by moment decision every day that I’m going to follow Christ and live His will and His way. How do you stay close in that relationship and nurture it? ... You have to stay in His Word and pray and worship and fellowship with others. You live out the faith and you practice it. Am I going to fail at patience? ...Probably. Are you going to fail? ...Probably. But we get up and do it again and again. You don’t get good at the piano unless you practice. I think if I

would ask Marty, he would agree with that. If you practice, you get better. We only get better with patience as we practice it, and God will allow us the opportunities that try our patience.

I had a Sunday School teacher when I was a teenager that once said, “Peggy, I learned to quit praying for patience because every time I did, God put me in situations with people to make me patient – and I didn’t like it.” Well, none of us do, do we? **The trials are not to tear us down, but to build us up. Patience is a way that we show that we value others, we glorify God in it.** How do you deal with interruptions? How do you deal with inconveniences? How do you deal with those people who irritate you – that person in the family who just gets under your skin – that person that you are trying to teach something new and you get so impatient with? When you and I show patience, we are valuing others as God is valuing us.

I hope that you’ll pray the prayer with me of Dr. John Stott, who is a late pastor and book author who died a few years ago. He said:

“Holy Spirit,

I pray this day that you will fill me with yourself and cause your fruit to ripen in my life - the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. ”

Would you pray with me?

Holy God, we ask that you would teach us to be patient – whether that means idling our motor when we feel like stripping the gears – or whether that means delaying our gratification and waiting on someone. Help us to be patient with people, with circumstances, and situations knowing that you want to mature us spiritually - and, Father, every time we show your fruit, we glorify you. So, this day and this week, would you help us to glorify you? We ask in Jesus’ name. And all God’s people said, “Amen.”