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Finding Patience In An Impatient World

GALATIANS 5:21-25; LAMENTATIONS 3:24-26

Introduction

1. Most, if not all of us have heard the cliché, "Patience is a virtue."
2. How many of us would describe ourselves as a patient person?
3. You and I now live in a culture of instant gratification — we want it yesterday.
4. Many of you remember the days of the rotary phone with the party line:
 - a. You picked up the receiver and listened to make sure no one else was on the line.
 - b. If no one was on the line, you then dialed the number of person you were trying to reach, one number at a time, you waited for the rotary dial to reset before dialing the next number.
 - c. You then waited for the person to pick up the phone on the other end, sometimes for quite a while, especially if the person was at the other end of the house.
 - d. If the person was not at home, or didn't hear the phone ring, you had to call back later — there was no way to leave a message, and they didn't know that you had attempted to call them.
5. That changed with digital phones and answering machines — you could leave a message and the person knew to call you back.
6. Now, with cell phones, we expect the person to answer immediately, or call us back ASAP — we also have the ability to send a text, something else to which we expect an immediate reply.
7. We now live in a world of instant downloads, purchases with one click, same-day or two-day delivery, instant messaging, etc.
8. As a result, we are impatient, and our impatience comes at a price:

- a. Psychologically, our impatience . . .
 - 1) Leads to a sense of frustration and helplessness because we don't feel like we can do anything to improve our situation.
 - 2) It doesn't allow us to live in the present — we are constantly focused on what is coming next.
 - 3) adds to our anxiety and stress, because we tend to only see the negative side of each situation. Thus, our attitude is negative and we constantly complain.
 - b. Physically, our impatience . . .
 - 1) Puts us at a higher risk of suffering from high blood pressure.
 - 2) Causes our body to release the stress hormone cortisol.
 - a) These hormones stimulate the platelets in our body, making them more likely to clot in our arteries, thus increasing the potential for a heart attack.
 - b) They also cause the body's fat cells to release fat into the bloodstream.
 - 3) Can speed up the aging process by affecting the structures (telomeres) which protect our DNA from deterioration.
9. All that being said, patience . . .
- a. Allows us to enjoy our life to the fullest.
 - b. Boosts our self-confidence and allows us to adopt a more positive and pleasant attitude.
10. An old Chinese proverb states, *"One moment of patience may ward off great disaster. On moment of impatience may ruin a whole life."*
11. Perhaps you can see why the apostle Paul listed "patience" as a portion of the fruit which the Holy Spirit seeks to develop in our lives.

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I. What Is Patience?

A. PATIENCE DEFINED (*MAKROTHUMIA*)

1. Longsuffering, forbearance, endurance
2. It is the self-restraint and emotional calm we demonstrate in the face of provocation or misfortune.
3. It is a composite of other virtues love, self-control, humility, and generosity.

“Love is patient” (1 Corinthians 13:4).

4. It is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy.

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B. IT IS A PART OF GOD’S NATURE

1. His longsuffering toward us is evident throughout history:

- a. In the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:20).

“. . . the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.”

- b. In His relationship with the Israelites (Nehemiah 9:16-21).
- c. With us today (2 Peter 3:7,9).

“But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men . . . The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

2. He is patient with us because . . .

- a. He wants us to repent and be saved (Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:15)

“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”

“and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation . . .”

- b. He wants us, even though we are sinners, to be able to experience His

lovingkindness (Psalm 103:8-18).

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C. TOWARD WHOM OR WHAT ARE WE TO SHOW PATIENCE

1. Nuisances in our lives.
 - a. Is there a certain person or set of circumstances that irritate you?
 - b. Do you find yourself wanting to complain about it, but you hold your tongue?
 - c. You do so, because you know that complaining would only make you sound petty, or make the problem worse.

“We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

“The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged” (2 Timothy 2:24)

2. Boredom
 - a. All of us at one time or other have struggled with boredom in our lives.
 - b. For whatever reason, time and events seem to be moving rather slowly.
 - c. It is during such times we can take a lesson from the farmer.

“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.” (James 5:7)

3. Physical or psychological suffering
 - a. Are you struggling with a disease or some form of mental illness?
 - b. Are you needed to assist someone else who is suffering, perhaps a family member or friend?
 - c. If either of these is true in your life, patience is needed.

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2–4)

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II. The Problem of Impatience

A. WITH WHOM DO WE FIND OURSELVES IMPATIENT?

1. Other People

- a. Everyday living finds us impatient with those around us.
 - 1) The person ahead of us in line (traffic light, checkout counter, etc.)
 - 2) Our parents who don't respond as we think they should.
 - 3) Our children who have yet to reach maturity.
- b. In His parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:23-35), two individuals sought patience from another, one received it, the other did not.

(The slave to the king) “Have patience with me and I will repay you everything” (v. 26).

(A fellow slave to the first slave) “Have patience with me and I will repay you” (v. 29).

2. God

- a. In each of our lives, there comes a time when we must wait upon God.
 - 1) To answer a prayer.
 - 2) To fulfill a promise.
 - 3) To comfort and strengthen during a trial.
- b. In each of these, patience is required, but sometimes we fail the test, even as King Saul became impatient in waiting for Samuel to come and

offer the sacrifices before the Israelites went into battle (1 Samuel 13:1-14).

3. Ourselves
 - a. None of us have perfected the art of being patient with ourselves.
 - b. How many times have we become angry or frustrated with ourselves because we weren't able to do something as we thought we should.

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B. WHY ARE WE IMPATIENT?

1. We think first and foremost about our own thoughts and feelings — our natural tendency is to put ourselves first.

“. . . do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).
2. Our individual strengths and weaknesses differ from those around us.
 - a. Others may struggle with a temptation which doesn't tempt us, and we wonder why they have such a problem.
 - b. Because we don't have their peculiar weakness, we can't understand how hard it is for them to keep from failing, nor are we patient with them when they fail.
3. God doesn't act in the way or at the time when we think He should.

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III. How Do We Develop Patience In Our Lives?

A. ENTER THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

1. Let me take you back to a passage which I shared with you just a moment ago (James 1:2-4).

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

(James 1:2–4)

2. God designs trials into our lives to help us grow.
3. Is there a family member or a person with whom you work that annoys you.
4. Consider that person God's gift to you to build your patience.
5. Are you stuck in a job you don't like and you can't find any other work.
6. Perhaps God is using that job to build your patience.
7. Remember what Paul said in Romans 8:28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."
8. "All things" includes those things which test our patience.

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B. BUILD YOUR PATIENCE THROUGH BIBLE STUDY, MEDITATION AND PRAYER

1. As the prophet Jeremiah was surveying the carnage in Jerusalem following its destruction by the army of King Nebuchadnezzar and seeing many of the people he knew being carried away into captivity, he wrote these words we find in Lamentations 3:24-26:

"The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him." The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the Lord."

2. Spend time in God's Word. Meditate upon the truths you find therein.
 - a. Make God your portion. Hope in Him.
 - b. Know that He is good to those who patiently wait for Him, to those who seek Him.
 - c. Learn to wait silently for His salvation.
3. Pray that He will guide you and help you to become a more patient person: patient at home and work, patient with your spouse, your children and your co-workers, patient with all those around you, including yourself.

6b**C. WORK TO PUT YOURSELF IN OTHER PEOPLE'S SHOES**

1. In Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the main character, a lawyer named Atticus Finch, at one point says, "You never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them."
2. Why is the student so difficult in class? Is it because their situation at home is more difficult than we can imagine?
3. Why is the cashier so discourteous? Is it possible that a recent customer has just chewed them out for no particular reason?
4. You and I don't know what happened in someone's house that morning, or what diagnosis someone just received from their doctor.
5. Try to put yourself in their shoes.

Conclusion

1. Being the hands of Jesus requires us becoming people who are known for our love, our joy and our peace, but also people known for our patience.
2. This week,
 - a. Let someone merge in front of you in traffic, or go ahead of you in the grocery line.
 - b. Hold the door for someone to enter the building first.
 - c. Don't get upset over the small stuff.
 - d. Work to "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Timothy 2:2).
3. I pray that God will use our lives, as we patiently live them out before Him, to draw others to Himself.
4. If you are a person struggling with patience in your life, please come to know the Christ we serve.
5. Let Him transform you so that your life might please Him in all respects.