

PATIENCE

Introduction

A. On Wednesday evenings, we have been studying **2 Peter 1:5-11**, which is one of the most important passages in the New Testament. **Unfortunately, little attention has been given to it.** We will talk a little about why it is so important.

B. The text is complex:

1. First, we have the mention of *faith* and the command to **add to your faith**: i.e., the list to follow. **“giving all diligence,”**
2. Then we have the list of characteristics that we are commanded to add: **“..virtue; and to virtue knowledge, And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity,”**
3. Next Peter talks about the **result** of having these graces or not having them.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

3. Then Peter **concludes** by revealing the **result** of adding these things to our faith, along with another command to **give diligence** so that those who obey will experience the good result of doing what is commanded.

*10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for **if ye do these things, ye shall never fall**: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

C. Why is this text so important?

1. It teaches us how to keep from falling from the grace of God.

2. It teaches us two important things:
 - a) That “faith alone” is not enough—that some things are required to remain saved.
 - b) That **perfection** is not expected of us to remain saved, i.e., that we do not fall every time we sin, but rather our calling is an “*election sure*” because “if we do these things, ye shall never fall.”
3. The passage tells Christians what to do to **keep saved** and keep spiritual security or confidence.

Paul expressed that same confidence.

2 Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

4. The above passage is an elaboration on 1 John 1:7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.
 - a. **Thayer on the word “walk”**
 - 1) to regulate one’s life
 - 2) to conduct oneself properly
 - b. *The metaphorical use of the word “walk” in the Bible refers to the way in which an individual lives or conducts his or her life; and regularly, the Christian’s walk will be in stark contrast to that of the unbeliever’s. (Wesley L. Gerig)*

D. The lesson this morning is on PATIENCE, which is one of the Christian graces that are listed in the 1st chapter of 2nd Peter.

Joke: What kind of doctors have the **shortest temper**?
Pediatricians—because they have little patients.

1. I cannot think of a virtue that is more desperately needed, or harder to produce in our lives, than patience.
2. Peter tells us to add to our FAITH, **Virtue**, to virtue **Knowledge**, to knowledge **Temperance** and to temperance **PATIENCE**.
 - a. Another reason patience is so important is that we need it to develop these other **characteristics** or **graces** that **precede** and **follow** patience in the list.
 - b. It is doubtful that the passage is intended for us to think we are to work on these things only in the order given.
 - 1) ALL of these are to be added to our faith, and PATIENCE is needed to develop them.
 - 2) So, we are to continually work on adding to our faith: virtue; and to virtue knowledge, And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity;

Body

I. WHAT IS PATIENCE?

A. We begin by asking the question, "What is patience?"

[I developed a kind of patience when growing up learning how to hunt deer and squirrels. Had too much patience one day deer hunting – waited from before daybreak until dark in a tree stand. Saw nothing. Wasted an entire day. But that kind of patience is not really what is meant in the text. My cat has that kind of patience – he can wait motionless for hours to catch a squirrel or bird, but if he is hungry (wanting me to feed him) or not getting what he wants, he is very impatient and sometimes has a little *hissy fit*.]

Let's look together at some definitions of patience:

1. *"Patience is self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate against a wrong."*

- a. That's pretty good.
- b. When someone does you wrong, how do you respond—with patience or anger?

2. Here's another:

"Patience is the ability to accept delay or disappointment graciously."

- a. How do you deal with delay or disappointment?
- b. For some that's tough, yet patience is the ability to accept either without becoming upset.

3. Here's another:

"Patience is the powerful attribute that enables a man or woman to remain steadfast under strain—and continue pressing on."

- a. Maybe that is where some of you are.
- b. You're dealing with difficult circumstances.
- c. You're raising a child, or you're caring for aging parents, or maybe you have a loved one who is ill and you've spent long hours at the hospital or nursing home.
- d. You're weary, but **patience** is the quality that says, **"This, too, will pass. It's almost over. I can keep on keeping on."**

B. One more definition, and it is a good one:

"Patience is a calm endurance based on the certain knowledge that God is in control."

C. Patience should not always be continued—the time may come when one must give up and move on.

Illustration

Even though Israel had lost faith in God and paid homage to other gods, some of which they made with their own hands, God was very patient. But when it became apparent that they were not going to turn back to Him, God took action that changed their relationship.

Jeremiah 3:6 *The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. 7 And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.*

Patience is not an absence of action. If we properly apply Bible patience, we will look for the right timing to act, knowing our action should be appropriate in view of current laws, principles, prudence, and compassion.

What did God do in response to unfaithful Israel and when did He do it?

We have observed in the text that He divorced her, **but here is a fact that most miss: He let her marry!** And the very passage that tells us this is the same one that many, who teach that the divorced may not ever marry, often use to support their teaching. They try to **force** Romans 7:2, 3 to support their thinking but NEVER consider the context—the verse preceding and the verse to follow.

Romans 7:1 *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?* Who knows the law? Hebrews/Israelites

Verse 4 *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that **ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.***

Who was raised from the dead? Jesus.

Some unlearned brethren teach that “no divorce is acceptable,” yet **God divorced Israel and set the example for patience** before doing it. Others say only the innocent who initiate the divorce for adultery may marry, yet **Israel was not innocent** but nevertheless was **allowed to marry**.

We learn from 1 Cor. 12:13 that both Jews and Gentiles make up the church.

1 Cor. 12:13 *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Even today, Jews who repent and turn to God may, as individuals, enter into the marriage with Christ, which is the church, the bride of Christ, the New Israel.

I’m not going off on a side trail to kill time or teach on a hobby—I brought this up because it is God Himself teaching (by personal example) **the need for, not just patience, but also action, and forgiveness.**

It just happens that the passages we noted **utterly destroys the traditional teaching that a divorcee may not marry.** All that is left for people who seek the truth on this (rather than to maintain and defend tradition) is learn what Jesus really taught, which will harmonize with the Law that Jesus followed perfectly and taught as a prophet, and with the teaching of Paul. And if anyone was going to change the teaching on **who is allowed to marry**, it would have been him, but he did not. However, he did answer questions that Christians asked him. (See 1 Cor. 7:1,2; 8,9; 27, 28).

Illustration

The story is told of an artist who went to visit an old friend.

When he arrived, she was weeping. He asked why. She showed him a beautiful handkerchief that had great sentimental value, but which had been ruined by a spot of indelible ink. The artist asked her to let him have the handkerchief, which he returned to her by mail a few days later. When she opened the package, she could hardly believe her eyes. The artist, using the inkblot as a base, had drawn on the handkerchief a design of great beauty. Now it was more beautiful and more valuable than ever.

Application

Sometimes the tragedies that break our hearts can become the basis for a more beautiful design in our lives.

Be patient with the hurts over which you have no control. In God's hands they may even become a source of healing, help, and beauty.

II. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DEVELOP PATIENCE

Illustration

The story is told of a young Christian who went to an older Christian for help.

"Will you please pray for me that I may be more patient?" he asked. So, they knelt together and the old man began to pray.

"Lord, send this young man tribulation in the morning; send this young man tribulation in the afternoon; send this young man...."

At that point the young Christian blurted out, "No, no, I didn't ask you to pray for tribulation. I wanted you to pray for *patience*."

"Ah," responded the wise old Christian, "it's through *tribulation* that we learn *patience*."

- A. Developing patience is difficult because it goes against human nature—we aren't born patient, are we?

Illustration

When a baby wakes up in the middle of the night and is hungry, or its diaper is wet, it doesn't lie there and think, "I know Mom and Dad are tired. So, I'll just wait until a more convenient time to let them know that I need something to eat or my diaper changed."

No! That baby cries impatiently and continues to cry, with increased intensity, until it receives the attention it demands.

Children aren't very patient.

Have you ever traveled with a child?

That can be quite an experience.

Of course, some are better behaved than others.

Illustration

A four-year-old boy was traveling with his mother and constantly asking the same question over and over again:

"When are we going to get there?"

When are we going to get there?"

Finally, the mother got so irritated that she said,

"We still have 90 more miles to go. So, don't ask me again when we're going to get there."

The boy was silent for a long time.

Then he timidly asked, "Mom, will I still be four when we get there?"

- B. Now here's a second reason why developing patience is difficult—it's because weeds of pride, selfishness and anger can choke out the fruit of patience.

Illustration

Some years ago, a survey revealed that we have become an impatient and oftentimes angry nation.

We see it at work.
We see it in school.
We see it on the highways.

Illustration of How to handle a stressful situation with patience.

A man's car stalled in heavy traffic just as the light turned green. All his frantic efforts to get the car started failed, and a chorus of honking horns behind him made matters worse.

He finally got out of his car and walked back to the first driver behind him and said, "I'm sorry, but I can't seem to get my car started. If you'll go up there and give it a try, I'll stay here and honk your horn for you."

C. Thirdly, patience is difficult to develop because it's contrary to our culture.

1. We don't live in a relaxed culture.

2. Go to most *third world countries* today and you'll find a much different lifestyle.

a. They're more *laid back*.

b. They think, "**Whatever happens, happens—it'll be all right.**"

c. And they wonder why we're so uptight.

1) It's because we're on a fast track, and in a rat race.

2) We're in a world of fast food, quick print, expressways, 10-minute oil changes, and instant cameras and microwaves.

ILL.

There is even a church in Florida that advertises 22-minute services. Go there and they promise that in 22 minutes it will all be over, and you'll be out of there. The sermons are only eight minutes long (lot of compliments).

D. Another reason that patience may be difficult for some to develop is because of the thinking that impatience is a virtue.

1. We hear people say, "I may be impatient, but I get things done."
2. Getting things done is a good thing, but patience is the virtue we are seeking to develop—not impatience.
3. Hear the writer of Proverbs:

Proverbs 14:29 says, "*A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.*"

Proverbs 15:18 says, "*A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.*"

- a. We see in these passages some traits of a *patient man*.
- b. But is one impatient simply because he hurries, does not waste time, and gets a lot done?
- c. Is the boss impatient if he chides someone for working too slowly and not getting the job done fast enough? Maybe. Maybe not. The employee may or may not be working too slowly, but it is a judgment call, and the boss can make that judgment.

Summary

Patience is a *virtue*. Again, and again the Bible teaches us that we need to develop this virtue in our lives.

Illustration

A young man was very upset with his mother. They had argued, and at work that day he wrote her an angry letter expressing all the things that he felt were wrong with her. It was a very nasty letter.

After sealing the envelope, he handed it to a co-worker

to mail for him.

Well, the co-worker knew what was in the letter, so he put it in his pocket. *Maybe he'll have second thoughts about it. I can always mail it tomorrow,* he thought.

The next day, when he went to work, his friend was sitting there all forlorn, saying, "Oh, I wish I had never written that letter. I'd give \$100 to have it back."

Well, you know what happened, don't you? His friend pulled it out of his pocket and said, "Here it is."

This is just a story. In real life we don't get our words back once said or sent, do we?

III. HOW DO WE DEVELOP PATIENCE?

A. We are all convinced that we need to develop the virtue of *patience*, but how do we do it?

Let me give you four suggestions.

1. The first suggestion is the same with every one of these virtues.

a. How do we develop temperance?

b. How do we develop love?

c. How do we develop brotherly kindness?

d. How do we develop patience?

e. The answer is always the same: **"Abide in Christ."**

1) Jesus, in John 15:5, says, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

2) So, it is important to receive the nourishment that only Jesus Christ can give.

- 3) We **can produce patience** if we're abiding in Christ, walking in His steps ("*in the light*"), reading His Word, growing in our prayer life, and spending quality time worshiping and fellowshiping with brothers and sisters in Christ.
2. To develop patience, it might be helpful to just SLOW DOWN and rest—take it easy.

Illustration

God came up with the idea of a Sabbath day—a day for his people in Israel to worship and rest.

It is not New Testament Law—that was for Jews only. But our **bodies** need it, our **minds** need it, our **spirits** need it. We need time just to sit and reflect on God and what He's done and is doing and absorb His teaching.

So, take a walk.

Spend some time in the park.

Watch children play and listen to birds sing.

Read a book. Plant a flower and watch it grow.

But don't do like the little boy that planted a bean and dug it up every day to see how it was growing.

3. To develop patience, we need to learn to **overlook the little frustrations of life.**

Illustration

Warren Wiersbe tells about the time he picked up a hitchhiker who was kind of a hippie.

As they were riding along, they came to a detour that took them off the main road onto a twisting, hilly farm road.

Wiersbe said, "I was soon fretting aloud, anxious because we were wasting so much time, and

complaining about the chug holes in the road that we were being forced to use.

“Finally, the hitchhiker leaned over and said, ‘**Hey, man. Don’t sweat the small stuff.**’”

That’s a good lesson for all of us to learn.

4. To develop patience, learn to turn the BIG THINGS over to God.
 - a. We go to the doctor and are told we have a serious illness.
 - b. We may lose our job and wonder how we are going to pay the bills.
 - c. Sometimes our children disappoint us, and we don’t know what to do.
 - d. Our spouse may leave or die, resulting in life’s feeling empty.

Some things are very difficult to handle on our own, but with God’s help we can.

Illustration

There is a beautiful illustration of this in the 14th chapter of the Book of Exodus:

Moses has led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and they are standing on the bank of the Red Sea. Before them is this great body of water.

Behind them they hear the hoofbeats and the chariot wheels of Pharaoh’s army.

They are caught between the sea and an army.

What do you do in a situation like that?

They turned and cried out to Moses, *"Moses, weren't there enough graves in Egypt? You led us all the way out here to die in this God-forsaken place."*

Then Moses speaks: **v. 13**, *"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again."*

Now listen to v. 14, which is an important verse:
Moses said, ***"The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."***

Summary

So, it's critical that we petition God and then be **still** and **wait** on Him when it comes to the **big stuff** for which we need God's help.

IV. JESUS IS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF PATIENCE

A. Thus, we need to look to him as an example of how to be when it comes to dealing with things that tend to cause people to lose patience.

1. In the 26th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew we see Jesus coming to the Garden of Gethsemane.
2. Leaving the rest of the disciples by the gate, He takes Peter, James, and John with Him into the inner recesses of the garden, and says to them, ***"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me"*** (Matthew 26:38).
3. Then Jesus went on a little farther by Himself and prayed. Luke 22:44 says, ***"And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."***
4. Then when Jesus came back, He found Peter, James, and John sound asleep.
 - a. Now how would you react to that?
 - b. Here Jesus was experiencing the most terrible night of His life upon this earth, and his friends fell asleep, not once but three times—yet Jesus treated them with love, patience, and kindness.

B. There is just one more verse of scripture that I want you to see.

1. It is **2 Peter 3:9**, and it says, *"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."*

2. Have you ever stopped and wondered why God hasn't intervened regarding some things?

a. Why doesn't God eradicate the evil dictators from off the face of the earth?

b. Why doesn't He intervene when there is terrible injustice?

1) For one reason, God is patient, and He wants everybody to be saved.

2) Every day that He waits is just one more day for people to repent and come to Him.

3) And, of course, it could be said that there is a place for evil people in the world—that we would not appreciate good people, justice, and love if there was no opposite.

4) At any rate, at some point men like the Egyptian Pharaoh, Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden will reap the *"wages of sin."*

CONCLUSION

If you have not come to Jesus, realize that there are limits even to God's patience.

But His patience is available now. He wants you to come to Him.

The door of salvation is open because the Lord is patient.

The door to Jesus is open because the Lord is patient.

Right now, the opportunity for us to be saved from our sins is still available, because the Lord is patient.

So, we extend the invitation of Jesus, and we pray that you'll respond today to what the Lord has offered through Jesus Christ.

The audio of this sermon is online at www.TotalHealth.bz and the PowerPoint file that goes with it is available upon request.

Adapted from sermon by MELVIN M. NEWLAND, MINISTER CENTRAL CHRISTIAN, BROWNSVILLE