

## PATIENCE: LOVE LASTING

Galatians 5:22-23/Colossians 3:12-13

29 May 2011

Welcome. We are continuing our series on the Fruit of the Spirit this morning. Those of you who have been with us so far will remember that the letter to the Galatians uses the singular, fruit not the plural fruits. So we are looking at the essential fruit of a spiritually mature life is love. That love in which we grow and by which we grow well, is revealed in different ways. Today we look at Holy love as patience, that is love for a lifetime, love over the long haul, love that lasts.

We all have times when we need to practice patience. Did you hear about the teacher who was helping one of her kindergarten students put his boots on? He asked for help and she could see why. With her pulling and him pushing, the boots still didn't want to go on.

By the time she got the second boot on, she had worked up a sweat. She almost whimpered when the little boy said, "Teacher, they're on the wrong feet." She looked and sure enough, they were. It wasn't any easier pulling the boots off than it was putting them on. She managed to keep her cool as they worked together to get the boots back on—this time on the right feet.



He then announced, "These aren't my boots." She bit her tongue rather than get right in his face and scream, "Why didn't you say so?" like she wanted to. Once again she struggled to help him pull the ill-fitting boots off.

He then said, "They're my brother's boots. My Mom made me wear them." She didn't know if she should laugh or cry. She mustered up the grace to wrestle the boots on his feet again. She said, "Now, where are your mittens?" He said, "I stuffed them in the toes of my boots . . ." Ever have one of those days?

We need patience to face the irritations, interruptions and the simple, everyday hassles of life. We need this virtue for health and success.

"Researchers have found a correlation between having a sense of . . . impatience and an increased risk of developing hypertension or high blood pressure. 'The higher the tendency of . . . impatience, the higher the risk of developing hypertension,' lead researcher Dr. LeJingh Yan told CNN." (November 20, 2002, by Debra Goldschmidt, CNN Medical Unit)<sup>1</sup>



Stanford University discovered that impatience in children is often seen in later life in people who are "more troubled, stubborn and indecisive, mistrustful, less self-confident, and still could not put off gratification. They had trouble subordinating immediate impulses to achieve long-range goals."

<sup>1</sup> [http://articles.cnn.com/2002-11-20/health/type.a.heart\\_1\\_tui-impatience-young-adults?\\_s=PM:HEALTH](http://articles.cnn.com/2002-11-20/health/type.a.heart_1_tui-impatience-young-adults?_s=PM:HEALTH)

If we assume that not everyone is genetically hardwired to be impatient, what causes impatience? How do we learn patience?

As for what causes impatience, there are situations. You put 12 socks in the wash and only get 11 back. Where do those single socks go?

There is the hailstorm ruins your car's look the day you have to make a really good impression. Or the perfect swing you make on the golf course only to be unable to find your golf ball. Situations.

People can trigger impatience. The person who rolls his grocery cart full of some 30-40 items into the express 15 items or less line. He waits until the cashier is finished before searching his pockets for a checkbook, has to borrow a pen and then discuss why this particular item cost 5 cents more than he thought the sign said that it did. People.

There is the story of the woman who spent 3.5 hours at the DMV station to get a new driver's license. She was fuming at the end of the experience. She also remembered that she had to buy her son a new baseball bat. As she is checking out of the store, she tells the clerk about the day she had at the DMV. The clerk looks at the bat, looks at the woman and asks, "Should I wrap it up or are you going back there?"

Last year in a Cordova parking lot two strangers got into an argument that resulted in one man shot dead. That was fueled in part by impatience. Strangers can set us off.

The people who really cause us to be impatient, though, are friends and family. In his classic, *The Screwtape Letters*,<sup>2</sup> C.S. Lewis<sup>3</sup> observed that when any two people have spent any significant length of time with each other, then both are aware of those things the other person does that drive you crazy. It isn't that he whines all the time, it is that complaining note in his voice. She doesn't exactly criticize, but the way she arches that one, just one, eyebrow. I don't mind my boss coming by my cubicle the clerical worker said, but does he have to lean over the wall, staring down at me like that creep in the movie *Office Space*?



The person who really makes most of us impatient, though, is the person looking at you from the mirror. A study from, I think it is UNC lists the four areas that make most of us impatient.

First is my desire for instant gratification. I blame NASA for this one. If they had not invented Tang, the rest of us would still live a little slower and be happy. I have actually heard someone complain that Amazon cannot get them a book earlier than 5 pm the *next* day! He was used to downloading every book he wanted on his e-reader and the 27 hour delay made my friend angry.

Similar to instant gratification is self-created stress. When I plan to do on a Saturday what a professional landscaper would schedule a week to do, then I create my own stress. One chain hardware store recognizes this tendency some of us have and has a series of commercial urging everyone to slow down, don't try to create the hanging gardens of Babylon in an afternoon. Make realistic plans while praying for guidance.

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Screwtape\\_Letters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Screwtape_Letters)

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C.\\_S.\\_Lewis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._S._Lewis)

Third, is when I am tardy. If I want to see a movie at the Collierville Theater and the movie starts at 1:30, then I need to leave east Memphis before 1:20.

Finally, what causes a lot of us to be impatient is when *those* people do not understand my simple explanation. They don't get what I am saying. They inconvenience me with their slow responses.

All of these situations reflect a sinfully egotistical life pattern. All of those patterns come from being narcissistic. If we expect the world to be centered on our desires, wants and passing interests, we will react impatiently, we will react childishly, when we do not get our way. That life is not one that is grounded in Holy love.

The fruit of the spirit is love over a life time, love that is not hurried or self-absorbed, love that is, in a word, patient. How to live like that? What to do when we feel that impatience building inside?

First, shift your perspective. If the driver in front of you is doing 25 mph in the left lane of Poplar, impatience says, crowd his bumper, tap your horn, think bad thoughts. Instead, shift your perspective. Imagine the people up there as the kindly, old aunt and uncle you used to love to visit. They were always fun and welcoming, told great stories and gave great gifts. How can you be impatient with that old couple?



Second, shift your timeline. Few, if anyone, will have your world end if you are 2 minutes late. Near my home is a street that has a long sweeping curve, with the road lined in woods on either side. Bicyclists like to use that road. They don't go as fast as I might in my car. I can get impatient with them or I can enjoy the trees, the undeveloped stretch of woods right by my house. I can shift my timeline.

Third, shift your schedule. Make opportunities for prayer in the middle of the day. Just because I have a car, doesn't mean I have to take the parking space closest to the store. I can, and often do, park far away. Then I spend the time walking thanking God for something, turning over to God some concern or remembering someone in need to God and praying divine care for that person. Shift your perspective, timeline, and schedule. Allow the moment that you might get impatient to be a moment when you ask God to remind you that you, sinner that you are, have been forgiven, loved, and restored to grace time and again. Which me to my last point.

Righteous anger, holy anger, righteous indignation is called for at times. Some of you have suffered real injury, deep pain, or crippling wounds. Those are causes of holy anger. If your good name is stolen by some bent and twisted person who tells lies and slanders about you, you have the right to be justifiably indignant. If your spouse or child is injured by someone's deliberate wicked anger, I say that you have the obligation to claim holy anger. You may cry out for vengeance. You may demand justice. You have an honest, human right to express holy anger. But you must know this. Vengeance and justice both are the Lord's not yours, not mine.

To focus on vengeance, to seek vengeance, will do you damage. We have countless sayings that remind us of that. *Vengeance is like a bucket with a hole in the bottom, all it can carry is its own emptiness.* Or, *Before you go on a quest for vengeance, dig two graves, one for*



*your target and one for you.* The bible is clear; *Vengeance is mine says the Lord.* Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30, Deuteronomy 32:35. A thirst for vengeance leads to a heart that is bitter and damaged. God will avenge you. Sometimes God will work through the criminal justice system. Sometimes God will work in other ways. You do not have to be impatient in waiting. Vengeance will be taken.

And what if justice is delayed? What if the guilty continue to go free? Know this. Keep this truth in your heart. This life is only a part of eternity. God's reign of grace and goodness and righteous living will

come to full blossom. Every tear shall be dried "... death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4). All that will come to be in God's time. Holy time is not always my time. When I am injured I say "God let your time be now so that everyone will know that I have been wronged." I get impatient in other words and I try to push God into being my servant instead of the other way around.

Every time I forget who I am, the creature, not the creator, the child of God, not the Divine Parent, God speaks to me through someone or some event. "Time is my creation also," He says. "The person you want injured is my child as well. Find your center in my love, not your ego needs. Tend the garden of your soul. The fruit of the spirit is love that lasts, love over a life time, not used up all at once. Be patient. That is a holy life."

Bonus video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRTkCHE1sS4>