

Paul writes in Galatians 5. 22: But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

We are continuing this sermon series called **Marks of a Flourishing Life: Fruit that Nourishes Relationships**. We're not just talking about building self-awareness and developing people skills – we are teaching about the flourishing of our relationships fueled by the development of our Christ-like character.

This morning we will look at the spiritual fruit of patience. Being patient is counter-cultural: many feel “the need for speed” on the internet highway.

The word translated into English as “patience” has the sense of be “longsuffering” in the original Greek.

This is the same Greek word that translates the Hebrew term in a self-description of God is used in Ex. 34:6: Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger [= patient/longsuffering] and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Patience is not a sign of weakness but of strength to actively making positive progress in the most trying social or interpersonal circumstances.

For the remaining of the message, we will consider what posture to have and how patience is to be manifested and sustained in our relationship with God, others, and self.

Patience with God: *be trusting & faithful.*

Having patience with God is a tough one for many people.



Some have given up, become apathetic, bitter, resentful, rebellious, or have completely disavowed God.

Our sense of wonder about to where our future is leading, our desire to understand the parts in relation to the whole, all underline our yearning to control our destiny.

Listen to what King Solomon – the wisest king of his time – says:

“For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven ... God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end.” (Eccl. 3:1, 11 NLT)

“Eternity in the human heart” is set in view of “He has made everything beautiful in its time”, i.e., God’s sovereignty and purpose.

Here the message is clear: humans don’t know everything, but God puts eternity in the human heart, knows what’s best and best timing for His children, and He makes everything beautiful in His time, thus continue to trust and obey Him. We must relinquish our human tendency to be in control and stop creating God in our image!¹

In his most recent book, *Mindset 2.0*, R. Michael Anderson refers to our desire to have control over our lives as “the ultimate addiction ... Stress is what arises when we’re trying to control something that we can’t.”²

If our patient heart means be trusting & faithful, then worship and waiting will sustain it.³

¹ The persistence and firmness of our faith is built upon the promises of God, despite our feelings; we hold tight to the goodness and wisdom of our loving Father in the face of adversity. Hold on to this truth: “For If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.” (2 Tim. 2: 13)

² R. Michael Anderson, *Mindset 2.0*, p. 42.

³ Listen to what Asaph says when he’s struggling to make sense out of life when good things happened to bad people and bad things happened to good people: “So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is ... Then I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked ... You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny ... God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.” (Ps. 73:16, 17, 24, 26 NLT) Instead of despair, bitter and resentful, he pours out his heart to God in the temple, in worship – refocusing on God instead of derailed by adversity!

We are bombarded with hundreds of suggestions from companies and thousands of quick fix solutions from all kinds of businesses in the media to “take the waiting out of wanting.”⁴

But “waiting” doesn’t necessarily equals “wasting time”:

Waiting ≠ Wasting Time

The bible talks about “wait upon the Lord,” referring to “trust in the Lord”, “hope in the Lord”, “look for the Lord”.⁵

So we could be waiting ...

- for better/opportune time [in HIS time],
- or for change of attitudes in self or in others,
- or for the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

I call this “Purposeful Waiting” – it is “Redemptive Waiting.”

Purposeful Waiting = Redemptive Waiting

In the spirit of submission to God’s sovereignty ...

⁴ Take heed the following words from Philip Kenneson: “When combined with self-interest the fixation on speed accelerated the drive toward immediate gratification. We want what we want, when we want it; and that is almost always now ... waiting involves slowing down. Waiting inevitably involves ‘wasting’ time ...” (*Life On The Vine*, p. 112.)

⁵ “But they who **wait for the LORD** shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

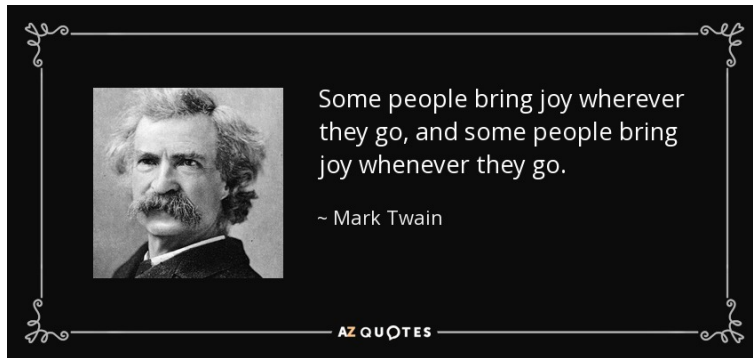
“I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” (ps. 27:13-14)

- We pray for discernment and consider the present situation in God's perspective/His big picture in mind.
- We ask how we can align our life with God's will and trust that our good Father is working out His own ways, in His time for our growth and maturity.

Patience/longsuffering is always used in relation to people.

Patience with Others: *be generous and empowering.*

I am sure that there are “extra-grace-required” individuals in our life – folks with whom jaw-clenching, teeth-grinding, nail-biting stress, frustration, and anger always occur!



It's pretty amazing that, with all the mistreatments, betrayals, false accusations, slanders, and persecution, Paul could still admonish fellow believers with these words:⁶

⁶ Cf. 1 Cor. 13:4a - Love is patient; 2 Tim. 2:24 - A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone ... and be patient with difficult people.

“Be patient/longsuffering [i.e., waiting sufficient time before expressing anger] with each other, ***making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.***” (Eph. 4:2 NLT)

“Be patient with everyone. See that ***no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.***” (1 Thess. 5:14-15 NLT)

Being patient with each other is first and foremost **being generous in spirit** - “making allowance for each other's fault,” “pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love,” “bearing with one another.”

Being patient to all also means **to empathize and bring out the best in others** i.e., by not paying back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.

Practically speaking ...

- We hold up an umbrella of mercy for the person [not being self-righteous or judgmental].
- We give the benefit of doubt [not reading evil intent into one's motive immediately].
- We empathize with the person by attentive listening [walking in the other person's shoes].
- We empower the individual to becoming God-image-bearer [help the person to doing good].

We see by now that this fruit of the Spirit, patience, is really a response of obedience to Jesus' dual-commandment to love God and others. But let's not forget the two important words:

"You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor **as yourself.**'" (Mk. 12:30-31)

Some of us have difficulty with proper self love as God's beloved children; we are impatient with our Self.

Now we are going to take a quick look at this issue.

Patient with Self: be grateful & self-aware.

For many of us we are finding it most challenging to live with the tension of self-absorption/self-centered and self-acceptance; we swing between thinking too lowly and too highly of ourselves, feelings of inferiority and superiority, self-pity and pride.

The bible teaches that, as a child of God and a Spirit-filled Jesus-follower, our heavenly Father accepts us for who we are, while not leaving us at where we are at but enabling us to conform to the image of Jesus:

"God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset **to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son ... We**

see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him." [Rom. 8:29 *The Message*]



"Michelangelo's David is massive at 17 feet tall and more than 12,000 pounds, yet it is sculpted from a single block of white marble.

According to Michelangelo's biographer Ascanio Condivi, Michelangelo ... created a wax model of his design, and submerged it in water. As he worked, he would let the level of the water drop, and using different chisels, sculpted what he could see emerging."⁷

We must not forget why patience is so essential by comparing the shaping process we are going through to an artist sculpting a work from a piece of marble. Chip by chip over time, an artist uses hammer and chisel to shape a

⁷ <https://www.michelangelo.org/david.jsp>

sculpture from a raw slab of marble, shaping it along the same lines as what he has envisioned, until the finished figure is revealed.

God is doing pretty well the same with us; we must be patient in allowing God to complete His re-creative work of shaping us along the same line of Jesus by our constant yielding to His tools. Patience is of paramount importance so God can mold us into the likeness of His Son.

The measure of our success is

- not comparing what others have accomplished,
- or fulfilling our selfish ambitions,
- or, more tragically, living out someone else's dreams for our life!

God never wastes our time and our past; whatever happened in life should be considered as the scaffolding for shaping us into Christ's image.

Be grateful for God's re-creative/restoring work and be self-aware of areas we need to grow so we could partner with Him to transform our lives and become agents of change in the world.

I love the epithet on Ruth Graham's memorial stone:



End of Construction - Thank you for your patience.

Paul's testimony is instructive:

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as **a prime example of his great patience** with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. (1 Tim. 1:15-16)⁸

Like Paul, God never wastes out past – both our strengths and weaknesses could be used to advance His kingdom purposes and to bring healings to others in this world!

⁸ "I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!" (1 Cor. 9:19-23)

Paul's life is a testimony of God's great patience, a display model of His redeeming power and love reaching out to all.⁹

The practice in being patient with self is **living our strengths in service and sharing God-stories of our weaknesses with others.**



Conclusion: Let's close by putting it all together,

I think it is most appropriate for us to pray the adapted words of St. Francis together:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O DIVINE MASTER, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console:

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive –

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

⁹ "God's patience has not only a purpose but also a clear object ... we are called to be patient, not for the sake of patience, but for the sake of another." (Philip Kenneson, *Life On The Vine*, p. 112.)