

Character Clues – Patience  
Sunday, January 15, 2012  
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House of Christ's Love

**Read** Galatians 5:22-26

## **Pray**

Well today we are continuing in our Fruit of the Spirit series and I want to talk to you about PATIENCE!!

1. "Be patient" comes from the combination of two Greek words (makros) which means "far away or slow" and (thumos) which means "anger, heat or rage." And so for our purposes today, (makrothumia) in Greek means that we are slow to get mad.
2. It's the idea of not getting mad over the little irritations that are so much a part of everyone's life.

And as we are looking at this whole idea of developing our character and when we read this passage in Galatians, we come to the understanding that if the Spirit controls us, our impatience, our anger can be under control.

As I take a look at my heart and do an inventory of my life, there are some days when I just throw up my hands and say, "well, I failed at that patience test today" I don't always do very good with patience. Sometimes it can be a real challenge. It seems that there is always something to try our patience. We wait on traffic and we wait in lines. We wait to hear about a new job. We wait to complete school or to retire. We wait to grow up or for maturity in a child. We wait for a decision to be made. We wait for someone to change his or her mind. Every day presents plenty of occasions for training in patience.

We can resent waiting, we can accept it or even get good at it! But one thing is for sure - we cannot avoid the tests of patience.

My question for us this morning is, "How are we doing in the area of our patience?"

It's interesting to note that when Paul describes life outside of Christ, he often describes an angry life. The fruit of patience is in direct contrast to the acts of the sinful nature in Galatians 5:20: "...hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions and factions."

He also tells us in Colossians 3:12 to "clothe ourselves with...patience." If we don't consciously surrender to Jesus on a daily basis, we'll express these fleshly flaws instead of the Spirit's fruit.

We want to go right down to the foundation, or the root of impatience, which is uncontrolled anger.

## **Why is it difficult to develop patience?**

1. **It goes against human nature.** From the moment we're born we want things taken care of right away. When a baby wakes up in the middle of the night and is hungry, it doesn't lie there and think, "I know mom and dad are tired so I'll just wait until breakfast time." No, the baby cries impatiently until it receives the attention it demands. And for you and I, as sad as it may sound, I'm not sure if even as adults we have changed much? Developing patience is difficult because it goes against our natural way of how we operate.

2. **It's contrary to our culture.** Those of you who have traveled to other countries recognize that we as Americans are wound pretty tight.

III. – A few years ago I took a group of adults and teens on a missions trip to the Bahamas. We arrived on a Sunday and we were expected to go to church that night. To be honest with you, we were exhausted from our trip that day, we really didn't feel like going, we weren't prepared to go at all, but our missions host was persistent and demanded that we immediately get ready for the 7pm church service (45 minutes away) and he didn't want us to be late. We quickly found that our air conditioners in our rooms didn't work, our showers were a hit and miss but nonetheless, we

hurried.....all 20 something of us boarded the bus as soon as we possibly could. The girls were a disaster, more emotionally than anything else. The guys looked like they had just jumped in the pool and were drenched from sweat. We arrived just before 7 and found only 2-3 people there. We thought that was strange. 7:15 came by – 5-10 people, 7:30 came by – a few more.....and we were getting so incredibly irritated. We had hurried to make church on time and hardly anyone was here. Around 8 or so, we finally had a full house and that's when we started church. On the outside, we were smiling, but on the inside, every single one of us were dealing with an incredible amount of impatience. We don't live in a relaxed culture. As Americans, we have to be very careful in this area of our lives.

3. **It's because of pride, selfishness & anger** that can choke out the fruit of patience. Why is it difficult to have patience? Let me remind you what the scripture says, "Pride comes before a fall."

4. **It's because we want instant getification** - we're on a fast track, & in a rat race. We're in a world of fast food & quick print & expressways & 10-minute oil changes & instant cameras & microwaves.

III. I'm not sure what they are selling but a TV commercial's slogan from a couple of years ago was "instant getification". They are marketing to your need and my need to have what we want when we want and how we want it. Why? Because they know that we are impatient.

5. We think **impatience is a virtue**. So you hear people say, "Well, I may be impatient, but I get things done." Impatience is slow anger, it's not a virtue.

## **How do we become more patient?**

Here are some Scriptural truths that we can use to clothe ourselves with patience and manage our anger. Remember that impatience is slow anger.

### **1. Make a decision to control it!**

"It is better to be slow-tempered than famous; it is better to have self-control than to control an army." Proverbs 16:32(LB)

### **We have two decisions to make.**

- We can choose to fly off the handle at the littlest things OR,
- We can determine to wait on God and go at His pace...and not speed up.

### **The fruit of patience helps us to trust God's timing.**

Have you ever been in a situation where you've said, "I just can't help myself. You don't understand, I mean, when it happens, it happens, and I blow up. I can't control it. That's the way God made me." No, it's not friends. God did not put the seed of impatience in us.

Friends I know.....we've all been there. In that critical moment between making a decision to blow up or to wait, we have to realize that our impatience, our slow anger, can be managed.

III. A man noticed a lady in the grocery store with her 2 year-old in her cart. The child asked for cookies. Her mother said no. The little girl began to cry loudly. The mother patiently said, "Now Missy, we're half way done, it won't be long." The same thing happened in the candy aisle. This time the little girl kicked and screamed. The mother said, "There, there, Missy, only two more aisles and then we'll be done." At the checkout counter, the child reached for the gum. When her mom said no she began to scream louder than ever. The mother said patiently, "Missy, we'll be through this checkout stand in five minutes and then we can go home and both have a nice nap." The man followed them out to the parking lot and complimented the woman. And he said, "I couldn't help noticing how patient you were with little Missy." The mother replied, "Thank you, but, my little girl's name is Francine... I'm Missy."

We have to make a decision to control our anger.

## **2. Know what is at stake**

**Anger is only one letter away from the word danger.**

**The Bible is very specific about the damage done by uncontrolled anger.**

**Proverbs 15:18**, "Hot tempers cause arguments." I've heard it said this way before, "When your voice increases, your intelligence decreases" There's something that takes place in our brains that when the height of argument comes, our ability to think properly is lessened.

**Proverbs 14:29**, "Anger causes mistakes." **Ill. Shower pole broken**

**Proverbs 14:17**, "People with hot tempers do foolish things."

**Proverbs 11:29**, "The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left." Mom's, dads, listen to this verse.

**Proverbs 29:22**"A hot-tempered man starts fights and gets into all kinds of trouble."

## **3. Think before you act.**

"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control." Proverbs 29:11

Ill. A truck driver sat down to eat at an all-night restaurant. The waitress had just served him his meal when three guys riding Harley's showed up and swaggered into the diner. One grabbed the man's hamburger; another took a fistful of his French Fries; and the third picked up his coffee and began to drink it.

The trucker responded with great patience. He calmly got up from the table, picked up his check, walked to the front of the restaurant, put his money on the cash register, and headed out the door. The waitress watched as the big truck drove off into the night. When she returned, one of the bikers said to her, "He wasn't much of a man, was he?" To which she replied, "He's not much of a truck driver either. He just ran over three motorcycles out in the parking lot."

We might have to place him in the category of "fool" but you and I want to make sure that we are wise in our actions.

## **4. Express your anger.**

There are right ways and wrong ways to do this.

"If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin Do **not let the sun go down** while you are still angry,." Ephesians 4:26 (GN)

We have two ways that can appropriately respond to anger:

### **a. Admit it – be honest**

If we're angry or upset with someone, we can't act like we're not. It's not being true to ourselves, It's not being true to the other person. We have to be real with each other. **It's called transparency.** Sometimes I think that in settings like this, we in the church tend to be the least transparent! Why is that? We will never experience true biblical community if we aren't real with each other.

### **b. Be creative -**

Learn to express it in positive, healthy ways. Let me give you a few ideas:

- Go for a run and sweat out your anger.
- Write in a journal
- Take a drive and talk to yourself in your car.
- If you're a golfer, go out to the golf course. Take a golf ball, write the name of the person right on that golf ball, tee him up, get out your driver, line it up, and smack that thing!!
- I did that a number of years ago when I was in Maine! This guy at church was bugging the daylights out of me, and I wrote his name down, teed him up, and oh what sweet satisfaction came to my spirit when I smacked it!

Be creative....find out some way to express your anger in a positive way.

## **5. Retrain Your Thoughts**

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

The way you think determines how you feel. The way you feel determines how you act. Our beliefs control our behaviors.

So if I'm acting angry, it's because I'm feeling angry. And if I'm feeling angry, it's because I'm thinking angry. So I have to go clear back to my thought life and begin to retrain the way I think, since my thinking controls my behavior.

Our mind works like a tape recorder of yesterday. We grow up a certain way, we are in a particular environment that isn't healthy for us to be in, and our mind records those situations and acts on them. We have reprogram or retrain our thoughts.

## **6. Get around patient people.**

"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared." Proverbs 22:24-25

### **1 Corinthians 15:33**

Do not be misled: "**Bad company** corrupts good character."

Anger is contagious. It's a learned behavior. In fact, we learn how to blow up from watching other people blow up.

An author for Reader's Digest wrote about how he studied Amish people in preparation for an article about them. In his observation at the schoolyard, he noted that the children never screamed or yelled. This amazed him. He asked the principal why Amish kids don't seem to get angry. The principal replied, "Well, have you ever heard an Amish adult yell?"

Friends, if anger is a learned behavior, then we can unlearn it by spending time with patient people. James 5:10-11: "Brothers, as an example of patience in the midst of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.

## **7. Rely on Christ's help.**

"May God who gives patience, steadiness, and encouragement, helping you to live in complete harmony with each other -- each with the attitude of Christ toward the other." Romans 15:5

The key to having patience is to hold on to God and then slow down! Luke 21:19: "By standing firm you will gain life." Patience in well-doing is the fruit of faith. And impatience is the ugliness of unbelief.

Psalms 130:5-6 helps us see the correlation between the promises of God and the patience of the believer: "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning."

**BIG IDEA:** We learn patience by practicing being patient, when we understand that God is transforming us into His image as He gives us trials and situations in which we can practice our patience.

**Q:** Who is it that God has given you and I and placed in our lives that we need to be more patient with?

## **Pray**

Let's go home and practice patience this week.