

Sunday, July 30, 2017

2 Kings 5:1-19

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

I Corinthians 13

### Spiritual Fruit of Patience

We continue in our summer series focusing on the fruit of the Spirit as Paul described in his letter to the Galatians 5:22-23. Paul is teaching the young church at Galatia about the acts of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. Paul describes in verse 19-21 what he calls the acts of sinful nature also known as the works or sins of the flesh. These acts of the sinful nature are obvious and then he warns the people, if you live like this, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But those who will inherit the kingdom of God live by the Spirit. And the fruit of the Spirit is what Paul describes as the relational characteristics which lead us to grow. One such characteristic is patience but unless we are patient with others they will not know of how patient we might be. But what does being patient and having patience mean in this hurry up and wait world in which we live?

But what does it mean to be patient? If a person is patient they have the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset.

Today's technology and innovation has made routine tasks easier and quicker. We now have restaurants that can produce a family size meal for drive-through customers in seconds. We also have cameras on police officers, news coverage, and personal cell phones that record events on the ground as they unfold. With these innovations and other advances, an expectation has been set that we should no longer have to wait to get what we want or make judgments about right or wrong. For this reason, it is good to reflect on how the Bible define patience. This characteristic originates from God and is a combination of Godliness and self-control which of course are also a part of the fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus showed patience as he taught others. (John 8:1-11). A woman who had been caught in adultery was brought before him. Those who led her to him asked what he would do to her as the Law of Moses directed them to stone her. Jesus quietly bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. They asked him questions, and said, "If anyone is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. Jesus bent down and wrote some more on the ground. Quietly and patiently Jesus waited. He then heard those who had brought the woman to

him leave. In time, Jesus and the woman were the only ones left. Jesus told her, "I will not condemn you either. Go and sin no more," he said.

Do you remember being patient recently? What were you doing? For whom were you waiting? We often associate time and patience. Time seems to speed up but in reality it does not change. There is a time for everything and nothing will speed things up or slow things down as each day still involves 24 hours. As the writer of Ecclesiastes 3 points out there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven.—one must plant and wait for the harvest, one must wait for tearing down to end before the building up can occur; in order to gather together, first the items must be scattered; Some of these things are logically based, but often when we seek to be patient we cannot always find the time. Even a time of silence must end with spoken words.

One such man who had a high degree of authority was Naaman, a commander of the army of the King of Aram. The king highly regarded him and he was a valiant soldier. He also had leprosy a disease affecting the skin. During one of the battles a young girl was taken captive and she was from Israel. She came to serve Naaman's wife and she knew that her master Naaman had this leprosy. She told Naaman's wife that all he needed to do was to see the prophet in Samaria who would cure him.

Naaman informed the king of the servant girl's words and Naaman went to Israel with a letter from the King of Aram for the King of Israel. He also brought silver, gold and clothing and presented all of this to the King of Israel. The King of Aram thought that the Israelite king would be able to cure him but this was not correct. So when the Israelite king read it he thought a quarrel was ensuing, how could he cure this man of leprosy. Elisha, a prophet in Israel had heard that the king had torn his robes in frustration. Meanwhile, Naaman patiently stood and waited to be cured by someone!. Elisha told the king to send him to him and he would tell him what to do.

Naaman went with his horses, chariot s and entourage and stopped at Elisha's house. A messenger gave to this army leader the prophet's instructions of what to do—bathe himself seven times in the Jordan River and he would be cleansed. How dare these Israelites give him the run around—first the king didn't know what to do, the prophet asks him to come to his home, and he doesn't even speak to him. Then his messenger tells him to wash in the dirtiest river around! One could only imagine how impatient Naaman was and how he acted with his horses, chariots and army officers. He was in a rage—very angry. But just think of the servants who approached him.—calming him down, getting him to think rationally, if the prophet had told you to do something great would you have done it? How much more then, when he tells you, Wash

and be cleansed! So Naaman and the servants make their way to the River. He goes into the water and begins to wash himself. He goes under—nothing.. The servants are calmly watching. Down under a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> time.. still nothing. The water is not clean and Naaman is about ready to leave.. The servants tell him—4 more times.. so he goes under 4,5, 6—times and still nothing. Naaman is losing patience again. One of the servants yells, “One more time! “And sure enough once he’s up and out—his flesh is retried and is clean again. Upon healing, Naaman goes back to Elisha’s house and wants to pay him. But Elisha refuses—Naaman then tells him, that he believes in the Lord God.

Naaman was not a patient man- he was used to giving orders and these were obeyed immediately. He had to thinking about what he was really doing prior to going to the Jordan River. But he did it. He followed the instruction and was cleansed once he realize he needed to be patient and complete the task. But how often do we want to get a task and then finish it up as soon as possible.

Jesus demonstrated patience when the moments were difficult. When he was before Pilate the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Yes it is s you say. When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony that are bringing against you?” But Jesus made no reply, not even a single charge- to the great amazement of the governor. Jesus patiently waited until the time he would be led to the cross and his death.

How patient are you? Sometimes driving in the city’s construction zones people’s patience wears thin especially during peak travel commute times. People are always in a hurry—to get somewhere else. But how we approach these lines makes a difference in our attitudes and especially in our actions. What if we thought about the others on the road—those people are also in a hurry to wherever they go.

But what about being a good patient—when seeking medical care. Doctors and medical staff are not always able to meet the schedule. We know that when an appointment is scheduled we will often go early and then wait. We wait because if we leave—we miss our turn and the line continues on without us. But there is also the frustration—I could have been doing something else in this lost hour or two. During tough times and trials, having patience is necessary and it allows us to be strengthened and blessed by God. When we are patient we please God for it is the Spirit which helps us.

There is also the need to be patient like the story of the Chinese bamboo tree: You take a little seed, plant it, water it, and fertilize it for a whole year, and nothing happens.

The second year you water it and fertilize it, and nothing happens. The third year you water it and fertilize it, and nothing happens. How discouraging this becomes! The fourth year again, nothing happens.

But in the fifth year you continue to water and fertilize the seed and then---take note. Sometime during the fifth year, the Chinese bamboo tree sprouts and grows NINETY FEET IN SIX WEEKS!

Life is much akin to the growing process of the Chinese bamboo tree.

It is often discouraging. We seemingly do things right, and nothing happens. But for those who do things right and are not discouraged and are persistent, things will happen. Finally we begin to receive the rewards. These rewards do come to those who are patient for those who are patient are often those who are loved. And those who are loved share and show it freely and without counting the cost.

Think about this—of the seeds you planted in the lives of others 5 years ago-- Are you getting the results you want? If not, maybe today is the day to sow the seeds of what you want in the future- But you must be patient for this is the fruit of God's spirit..

#### PRAYER:

Holy God, we praise you for your teachings of the Spirit and how we may grow stronger and be more willing to share and have patience with others. Bless us O God as we seek to live by the fruit of your Spirit. Amen.

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