

I invite you to open your Bibles to this morning's scripture text, which can be found in 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, and Galatians 5:22-23. This can be found on page \_\_\_\_ and on page \_\_\_\_ in your pew Bibles. We continue in our series "Respectable Sins". Today's text encourages us to trust in God's perfect plan and His timing in all areas of our lives through the spiritual gift of patience.

The Word of God

*1 Corinthians 13:1-7*

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is **patient**, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

*Gal 5:22-24*

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

This is the Word of God, for the people of God

Why do we become so impatient in waiting for and working toward future goals and plans? How do you handle the delays in your life? What would you do if you could not reach that goal for which you have worked so hard and prayed so much? Would it be as if your life was over?

We have been trained in our fast pace, technological society, to expect quick results. Our lives are built around quick responses to emails rather than waiting days or even weeks for a response to a handwritten letter. We expect to get through a grocery line in record speed in the express check-out line. We expect to get cash quickly at the ATM without having to wait in line in the bank. We zip around in our cars to be served sooner in the drive-thru rather than having to wait in a long line inside for food. And when any of these services are slower than we think they should be, we begin to grumble at having to wait a little longer at the inconvenience.

We get stressed, complain, and feel like pulling our hair out. Is it any wonder that we, who are so accustomed to quick service, and have been trained to expect quick results, should struggle in our hearts with a God who works all things after the counsel of His own will and in His own time, and not according to our watches and calendars?

We live by our calendars and by our watches. We become so oriented to filling our calendars and making future plans for this or that event or goal that we forget that it is God that holds our future and ordains our paths every day. We so often forget to sanctify our plans (even mundane, ordinary plans) with God's blessing and prayer. Brothers and Sisters, it is so easy with such busy schedules to act as though we are directing our own paths and ordering our own lives.

And when our plans do not materialize or when they are delayed, we become frustrated, impatient, tired of waiting, and often make decisions and embark upon roads to reach goals without submitting our will to God's will. We must look to our gracious God and learn to patiently wait upon Him to direct us and to bless us in all of our plans for tomorrow, since our times are in His hands. ("My times are in thy hand" Psalm 31:15).

Impatience is a form of unbelief. It's what we begin to feel when we start to doubt the wisdom of God's timing or the goodness of his guidance. It springs up in our hearts when the road to success gets muddy or strewn with boulders or blocked by some fallen tree. The battle with impatience can be a little skirmish over a long wait in a checkout lane. Or it can be a major combat over a handicap or disease or circumstance that knocks out half your dreams.

The opposite of impatience is not a superficial denial of frustration. The opposite of impatience is a deepening, ripening, peaceful willingness either to wait for God where you are in the place of obedience, or to persevere at the pace he allows on the road of obedience—to wait in his place, or to go at his pace.

When the way you planned to run your day, or the way you planned to live your life is cut off or slowed down, the unbelief of impatience tempts you in two directions, depending partly on your personality partly on circumstances:

On the one side, it tempts you to give up, bail out. If there's going to be frustration and opposition and difficulty, then I'll just forget it. I won't keep this job, or take this challenge, rear this child, or stay in this marriage, or live this life. That's one way the unbelief of impatience tempts you. Give up.

On the other side, impatience tempts you to make rash counter moves against the obstacles in your way. It tempts you to be impetuous or hasty or impulsive or reckless. If you don't turn your car around and go home, you rush into some ill-advised detour to try to beat the system.

Whichever way you have to battle impatience, the main point today is that it's a battle against unbelief and therefore it's not merely a personality issue. It's the issue of whether you live by faith and whether you inherit the promises of eternal life. Listen to these verses to sense how vital this battle is:

Luke 21:19—"By your endurance [patience] you will gain your lives."

Romans 2:7—"To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, God will give eternal life."

Hebrews 6:12—"Do not be sluggish but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Eph 4:1-3 – "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Patience in doing the will of God is not an optional virtue in the Christian life. And the reason it's not is because faith is not an optional virtue. Patience in well-doing is the fruit of faith. And impatience is the fruit of unbelief. And so, the battle against impatience is a battle against unbelief. And so, the chief weapon is the Word of God, especially his promises.

Patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Impatience is a fruit of selfishness. And selfish is simply an ugly, accurate description of our fallen, depraved nature, which wants all of creation to serve us. Selfishness is the real archenemy of love:

Selfishness seeks its own private happiness at the expense of others. Love seeks its happiness in the happiness of the beloved. It will even suffer and die for the beloved in order that its joy might be full in the life the purity of the beloved (John Piper, *Desiring God*, 206-207).

Today's scripture, 1COR13:4 tells us "Love is patient." Love is patient because patience is a dying to selfishness. It is the belief that in this dying we will find greater joy in the joy of the ones we are seeking to love: God and neighbors. It's one of the ways we fulfill the two greatest commandments. Patience is revealed to be a promised gift from God, a fruit of the spirit. Gal 5:22-23 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. The promised fruit of the spirit, patience, will strengthen you towards the path of Love. It will reveal your heart and your faith in the promises of God.

I want you to see this relationship between the promises of God and the patience of the believer in Psalm 130:5. How does the psalmist battle against impatience in his heart?

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,

And in his word I hope.

"Waiting for the Lord" is an Old Testament way of describing the opposite of impatience. Waiting for the Lord is the opposite of running ahead of the Lord and it's the opposite of bailing out on the Lord. It's staying at your appointed place while he says stay, or it's going at his appointed pace while he says go. It's not impetuous and it's not despairing.

Now how does the psalmist sustain his patience as he waits for the Lord to show him the next move? Verse 5 says, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and IN HIS WORD I HOPE." The strength that sustains you in patience is hope, and the source of hope is the Word of God. "In his word I hope!" And hope is just faith in the future tense. Hebrews says, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for."

So what we have in Psalm 130:5 is a clear illustration that the way to battle impatience is to reinforce your hope (or faith) in God, and the way to reinforce your hope in God is to listen to his Word, especially his promises.

If you are tempted not to wait patiently for God, to let him give you your next move—if you are tempted to give up on him or go ahead without him—please realize that this is a moment for great spiritual warfare. Take the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), and wield some wonderful promise against the enemy of impatience.

There was a time not long ago in 2016 where I found myself locked in spiritual warfare with my own struggle against impatience. I was in a season of suffering, and doubt, nearly losing hope that there was going to be a new season of purpose and service for God in my life that I was so earnestly seeking.

You see, my job was draining me both physically and emotionally; working long ten to twelve hour days, six days a week, serving a corporation whose only goal was profit. My delight in sharing the love of Christ during my long work day was all that was sustaining me through this trying time. Fading from my desire was my will to sustain this work, as I was increasingly under more and more stress each day from the circumstances of my employers' agenda. I was ready to quit. Ready to abandon the very blessing of a career that God provided me. I was becoming impatient with God. Demanding resolution or change right now, in my timing and in my planning.

I can vividly recall the very powerful impact of seeking God, of Loving God, through this challenging time that clearly revealed to me the sustaining grace of His providential presence in my life. It was all His plan, it was all in His timing. As it is in all of our lives. Patience I was learning, was truly a virtue.

I began a time of fasting, prayer, and devotional readings to approach God directly for a revealing of his will for my life. Each morning I would begin with the same petition of prayer to God, asking Him to reveal my purpose and direction. Then randomly picking a devotional, asking him to speak to me through his word.

On the first day as I opened the first devotional book after prayer, his response was for me to take up my cross. A message of being dead to myself for the living of life in him for his purpose. Here I was, in pain and suffering from the day to day turmoil of life, but he revealed to me that this was for realizing self-sacrifice for truly serving him, living in his kingdom. His response; I know you are suffering, but it is for me that you are suffering, and you will be blessed because of your sacrifice.

On the next day as I opened the second devotional book after prayer, he revealed to me a lesson of patience. 1 Cor 13:4 Love, he said is patient. We are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our mind, and all of our being. Yet in our impatience, we reveal our lack of Love. If Love is patient. Then impatience is a lack of Love. A lack of trust in God's timing, and in his plan for our lives. This was a wake-up moment for me, a revealing of the true condition of my heart. He was asking for me to love with all my heart, all my mind, all my being. By giving him my patience. He was asking for my absolute love and trust by revealing my impatience to me. Love, is patient.

It became very clear to me on day three the importance of patience. For as I opened the next random devotional book after my petition of prayer, God repeated himself, again revealing another lesson of patience. Gal 5:22-24

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Patience leaped out at me off the page. When God repeats himself, he means business. One of the fruits of the Spirit is patience, and the fruits of the Spirit are promised gifts from God that reveal's our life in Christ, and our faith in God's plan for our lives.

Finally, on day four my closure came as God revealed the lesson of Hope as I opened my final devotional after my petition of prayer. My faith was restored in Hope. I knew that God's promise that he would never leave me nor forsake me was certain. He has a plan for our lives. He has planned in advance our days as his chosen ones, as his elect.



Remember what was revealed in Psalm 130:5, the way to battle impatience is to reinforce your hope (or faith) in God, and the way to reinforce your hope in God is to listen to his Word, especially his promises.

God's greatest commandment is that we love God with all of our heart, all of our mind, and all of our very being. God commands our love. In Col 3:12-13 God reveals again this very command, where we read, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." So if Love is patience, and God commands us to Love, then God commands us to be patient. We must, in order to demonstrate our absolute Love and trust in God's plan for our lives, in our faith of his timing in all things we must clothe ourselves with patience.

To fully experience the blessings of God in our daily lives, through all situations, to be blessed in what we do, we must learn patience.

There's a spider that lives on my porch. I see it each night when I put the garbage out, and I sometimes find myself stopping and admiring. Every night my porch spider builds a web. When it's finished the web will resemble a large wheel. But it's a laborious process. First my spider creates a framework, then he slowly and patiently builds a series of lines out from the web center, like the spokes on a wheel. To do this he must crawl along a web line already in place, spinning a new line out behind him. Once he's reached the end of the line he crawls down the porch strut and pulls his fresh line taut, then crawls back to the middle to start the process over again.

Once the spokes are finished it's time to create the series of circles that fit over it. Starting from the middle, crawling from spoke to spoke, the spider builds his first circle. Then another, and another and another. He stops at each spoke to secure the circle to it, until finally his web is finished.

Then my spider crawls off to the side and waits for his prey to fly into the web. I don't know what happens throughout the night, but by morning the web is gone, the whole process to be repeated the next night.

As I watch that spider so cleverly weaving his magnificent web I am struck by its patience. It seems like such a long and laborious process to go through every night. But if he is to get the reward he needs – the fly – he needs to be patient, patient enough to build the web day in day out, then patient enough to wait for his prey.

That spider reminds us that there are things in life for which we need to learn patience, that there are things that need to be built slowly and carefully if we are to find the reward life has to offer. The web we weave is one of relationships with the people we love and people who can be quite prickly, it's a web of daily chores required to keep a house functioning and routines that must be followed. At times we find ourselves growing impatient, wishing we could fast track all these processes, or even eliminate them altogether. But they are the web of life, and if we are to reap life's rewards then surely, we must find the patience to build that web.

We must look to our gracious God and learn to patiently wait upon Him to direct us and to bless us in all of our plans for tomorrow, since our times are in His hands.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your Love, Thank you for your Grace,

Thank you for sending us your Son, our Lord Jesus to be our Savior.

Forgive us father when we have conducted ourselves impatiently against

Our brothers and sisters, and against you Lord.

Give us strength to turn from our unbelief, and to

submit our will to your Loving and perfect will.

Grant us wisdom to trust your perfect timing and

the goodness of your guidance Father.

May our faithfulness to your plan and your many blessings,

be a witness to the world giving them Hope,

drawing them into a loving relationship with you Lord.

May you have all the honor, all the praise, and all the glory.

Amen.