

## 09-28-08 – A New Wardrobe: Patience

### Col. 3:12-14

We have been discussing A New Wardrobe according to Colossians 3:12-14 for the past few weeks. We have gone through a variety of Christian virtues Paul tells us to clothe ourselves with. Let's look at Col. 3:12-14 now and move on to the next attribute of the Christian life that Paul admonishes us to embrace.

#### Col 3:12-14

**12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.** NIV

The letter to the Colossians was written by Paul to correct some serious errors, as most of his letters were intended to do. Paul received word that heretical teachings were becoming prevalent in this area and even affecting the church he had started there earlier. There were issues about rituals, dietary rules, and holy day observances. A pagan influence that was building during this time even denied the deity of Jesus Christ – if He had really come in flesh form – They considered flesh evil and God pure. Paul writes to reinforce that **“in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” (2:9)**. Rather than speaking only against the negative issues or errors to this church, Paul chose to address the positive attributes of a holy Christian life. If Christians focused on these and purposed to walk in this manner, they would stay on track in the will of God and overcome the evil influences.

Today we are going to look at Patience as an attribute of God and of the Christian life. How many of you have ever prayed and asked the Lord for Patience? I know many of the ladies are away this weekend on the retreat, but there may be some who stayed behind who can acknowledge this request of God. Women, especially mothers always seem to be in need for patience. Well most women, at one point or another have asked for this virtue in prayer. “ Lord, I need patience and I need it NOW!”

### What Is Your Patience Quotient?

"I used to think I was patient, and then I had kids." Here, here! Who among us has not had our patience tested by children or other realities of life? Even extremely patient people do not think they are patient, so take heart. Patience is tied to your actions, not your feelings. Your level of patience is revealed in the everyday events in your life. Take this quiz to find out how much patience you have...

What is patience? We may all have our own interpretation. Let's start with a couple of definitions...

What do you think of when you think of patience? Think of a definition you think defines patience.

How do these definitions stack up with what you are thinking?

**Webster's** – Patience/Patient – bearing pain or trials calmly or without complaint – manifesting forbearance under provocation or strain – not hasty or impetuous – steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity – able or willing to bear.

**Theological Dictionary** – forbearance under suffering and endurance in the face of adversity (very similar to a worldly dictionary).

**Encyclopedia of Biblical Words** – quotes 1 Cor. 13:4 – “Love is patient.” Patience = restraint.

There are two Greek words for patience ...

**Hypomone** = **patience** with regard to things – Jesus endured the cross ...

**Makrothymia** = **patience** with regard to people. (Heb. 6:12 – “Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God’s promises because of their faith and patience.”)

I would like to focus on this second form of patience for the remainder of this message. Patience in this respect is a part of self-control. It is not so much a fruit as a way of life (although it is a fruit) – despite the circumstances. Keep on loving or forgiving others – no matter what. It is more of a divine attribute than a human attribute.

**Patience** – suffering, enduring or waiting, as a determination of the will and not simply under necessity.

A Christian virtue – FRUIT – We need to wait patiently “for God – to endure uncomplainingly the various forms of sufferings, wrongs and evils that we meet with, and to bear patiently injustices which we cannot remedy and provocations we cannot remove.”

**A Woman's Prayer** - Dear Lord, I pray for Wisdom, to understand a man, to love and to forgive him, and for Patience, for his moods, because, Lord, if I pray for Strength, I'll just beat him to death.

God’s patience requires forgiveness (more to come on this later on) – **Ps. 34:6 – “The Lord – slow to anger and abounding in love”** – “patience” does not exist in the O.T. – “wait” – “to expect”

In some translations it is rendered “gentle” – funny how these virtues all share together a commonality.

Compassion (mercy) – Kindness – Humility – Gentleness (meekness) – Patience

These are all inter-related as aspects of the Christian life – the holy life God intends for each of us.

Rom. 15:5 – God is called ... “The God of Patience.” - “able to grant that grace to those who look to Him and depend on Him for it.” It is only in reliance on God and acceptance of His will, with trust in his goodness, wisdom and faithfulness, that we are enabled to endure and to hope steadfastly.

God's patience – means that alongside the wrath, there is a divine restraint --- which postpones its operation until something takes place in man which justifies the postponement. Wrath may be fully visited. - GRACE - - - - <patience> - - - - WRATH

True patience is a gift from God and not merely a virtue of self-control. (A gift, part of the Fruit, a decision)

As Paul states in verse 12 of our text – Christians are: chosen by God – set apart by and for God (sanctified – holy) – and loved by God - - - chosen – holy – dearly loved.

Because of this reality, we should “clothe ourselves with...” - not “put to death” or “rid yourselves.” Paul appeals to our reason here. God chose you, sanctified you, and loves you so much – we should want to adopt these attributes as our mainstay of life experience in the sight of God and others.

Paul lists five Christian virtues: “compassion – kindness – humility – gentleness – patience.”

They point to those qualities of life which, if present in the community of believers, will eliminate, or at least reduce, frictions. All of them are manifestations of love (which will hear more about next week).

**Compassion** – pity and tenderness toward the miserable and the suffering.

**Kindness** – goodness, kindness, and graciousness - “sweetness of disposition” – a fruit of the Spirit.

**Humility and Gentleness** – related terms – not considered virtues by the pagan N.T. world, but noted as two of the noblest of Christian graces.

**Humility** – thinking lowly of ourselves because we are so – compared to God's best.

**Gentleness** – opposite of arrogance – delicate consideration of the rights and feelings of others.

As John said last week, a characteristic of Christ and a fruit of the Spirit.

John also said that fruit is not for the benefit of the tree (source), but for the benefit of others.

**Patience** – self-restraint that enables one to bear injury and insult without resorting to hasty retaliation. It is an attribute of God (Rom. 2:4) and a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

There are two Greek participles that expand the thought of Patience in the N.T. (v. 13) - “bear with” and “forgive” - - Christians who are truly patient will manifest this attribute by:

- a willingness to bear with those whose faults or unpleasant traits are an irritant to them
- a willingness to forgive those they have grievances against.

Bear with – putting up with things we dislike in others

Forgive – God's action toward us - has a sense of forgiving freely.

To help illustrate this point, I would like to look at the Parable of the Wicked Servant.

#### **Matt 18:21-35**

**21** Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" **22** Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. **23** "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. **24** As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. **25** Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. **26** "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' **27** The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. **28** "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. **29** "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' **30** "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. **31** When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. **32** "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. **33** Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' **34** In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. **35** "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

The passage right before this one is talking about forgiving a brother who sins against us. So Peter picks up where that leaves off and asks boldly of Jesus just how much forgiveness is enough, expected or required?

According to the Jewish Law one must offer forgiveness three times for a repeated sin (O.T.). Peter is going above and beyond the acceptable practice by asking if Jesus' more strict approach would go so far as to forgive more perfectly by using the number seven. As we remember from previous studies in the Word, numbers play a significant role in how we interpret the meaning of the text. Jesus' reply rocks Peter back. Jesus tells him we must forgive and keep on forgiving until the person is completely perfectly forgiven. This would take patience. This answer precedes Jesus telling this parable to describe how we are to behave in light of God's attitude toward sinful humanity.

Jesus says, as He does often in parables, that the Kingdom of God is like ... We shouldn't gloss over this statement so quickly. Jesus is saying, if you want to know what God expects, then listen up now hear?

So there's a king who represents God in the parable. A servant is brought to him who owes him 10,000 talents (in your footnotes it should say that a talent is an amount equal to about 20 years wages – and he owed 10,000 talents). How long would it take if he worked each year to pay off his debt? (200,000 years)

The point is that he owed a debt he could never pay – the amount owed the king was beyond payment. What would your approach be when brought before the king to settle up your account? Can you hear me now? What price tag could be put on the debt we owe God for our sin against Him? Jesus is making an eternal point here. We owe a debt to God that we could never pay. What is the king's judgment against such debt? **25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.** It's a lose-lose situation – The same as we all deserve.

Look at what the servant does: **26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'** There's our word for today – patient or patience. He's begging for absolution of judgment based on nothing on his own to earn it or deserve it. The man is not immediately imprisoned, which would have been in accordance with the Jewish Law under such circumstances and in line with humanity's deserving judgment before our Holy God because of our sin.

**27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.** The King's compassion or pity went out to him because he asked for patience in his dilemma. The King cancelled the debt. That means that He erased the debt – he tore up the IOU – He forgave him of all. The King (God) showed patience and forgiveness. They go together in the kingdom of God. Humanity owes such an enormous debt that cannot possibly be repaid, BUT God has cancelled our debt by His Grace – by Jesus paying that debt for us, which He didn't even owe on His own. Shouldn't we act accordingly? We are to be patient and forgive others the wrongs against us – the sin against us. The servant in our parable was asking for and expecting to receive grace from the king – and he did. If really taken seriously (as it should be), this attitude of gratitude would then be passed along to his fellow servants.

This all sounds wonderful, but the text continues ... This forgiven servant went out and found someone that owed him a small amount (about 100 day's wages). He grabbed him and choked and demanded to be repaid immediately. Look at what this other servant does: **29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'** – Does this look familiar to you? It should to the forgiven servant too. How does the forgiven servant react to this plea for patience? **30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.** He was not patient, and he did not forgive as he was forgiven of his unpayable debt.

Jesus uses these to extremes of patience – that of the King and then of the wicked servant – to show a contrast between God's attribute of patience and the world's lack. Jesus both adopts and transcends the Jewish understanding of patience in this parable.

In Jesus' teaching in this parable, if man fails to show divine patience to his neighbor, this calls into question again the divine patience extended to him. This all becomes more

serious when looked at in this light. So the owner took back his patience with the debtor and held him to the same judgment he used against his neighbor. Just because God is truly patient, this does not rule out divine judgment upon those who themselves do not show true patience with others.

When we begin to understand the patience of God, we can then begin to experience a small measure of patience back toward Him and also toward our neighbor. Here, as usual, is where the most important commandments crop up yet again. Love God – Love others the way God loves you. 1 Thess. 5:14 – Paul commands us to “... be patient with everyone.”

If we continue on in our parable we see something that we don't like to consider... God can take back His mercy and compassion just as easily as He gives it to us. He is gracious toward us in that we can ask for patience which yields God's grace toward us and forgiveness and receive it, but if we turn away from God, He can and will re-institute His judgment against our sin. We are to be patient with others just the way God is patient with us. We are not just supposed to know how God wants us to live, we are supposed and even required to live this holy life before God and our neighbors.

When I think of the things I do against the will of God (whether intentional or not), I am humbled and ask for His patience with me and for forgiveness for the offense committed. Then I'm like – I'm sorry for being back again so soon for the same thing, Lord, but – please be patient with me and change me in Your time. Then someone comes along and messes me up and I retaliate or lose my “patience” with them – duhh. Yo – how patient is God with me? And how am I reacting to my neighbor? Am I exhibiting the patience of God? Am I being a forgiving Christian or am I the same as the rest of the world?

Patience is also something that helps us endure the hard times in life. We are waiting for the promise of the coming again of Jesus in power and great glory. This promise has been the sustaining means of patient endurance for centuries now, and it must remain our source of patient endurance too. Our hope of the promise future in the presence of God must be paramount in our attitude toward others and in our ability to endure suffering and hardship and even direct effects of attacks from our fellow human beings.

#### **Some Scripture from the NLT:**

**Rom. 2:4 – Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?**

**2 Pet. 3:9 – The Lord isn't really being slow about His promise to return, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.**

**Eph. 4:2 – Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.**

**Rom. 9:22 – God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment and are fit only for destruction**

And shouldn't we also have this same attitude? It ain't easy! That's why Paul compares this to clothing. We must clothe ourselves everyday purposely with the proper attire as a Christian because we represent God to the ungodly, and hope to the hopeless, and patience to those in need of forgiveness.

**1 Tim. 1:16 – But that is why 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.**

Are you a good representative of God on this earth by your patience with others around you and especially those who offend you the most? It's time to make some changes toward that goal. If you are chosen by God, holy (or set apart) and dearly loved by God, wouldn't you want to represent him to others in a way that pleases Him and doesn't bring his judgment upon your head?

As we clothe ourselves with these virtues of Christian living we will be able to counsel those in need around us and lead them into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ – or at least be able to counsel them about the kingdom of God and why we behave the way we do when the world does not.

Newsday: **Ask the Clergy:** How would you counsel someone who is not religious but is open to change?

Notice how all five attributes or virtues were included in some way in this pastor's response. We can speak to those around us, outside the church, who need to know God, BUT we must first put on this new wardrobe that Paul teaches us about. We must first clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience/forgiveness on a daily basis.