

Sept 10 – Patience, (Forbearance, Perseverance, Diligence, Restraint, Tolerance, Serenity, Calmness)  
Jeremiah 17:8; Galatians 5:13-15, 21-26; 1 Peter 1:14-16

God grant me patience! And I need it now!!  
Have any of you ever felt that way? Have you actually said that? Patience—a contradiction of having to wait when waiting is NOT high on your “want” list. We’ll come back to patience in a bit; in the mean time, be patient....

Last Sunday we observed Communion, as we do the first Sunday of each month. Communion invites us to remember Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection bringing us new life. This last week, the area public schools began a new school year. Students brought their new school supplies; many wore new clothes as they met their new teachers in their new classrooms.

New life, new opportunities to learn. “New” means something is different, not like it was.  
Paul, writing in 2 Corinthians 5:17, tells us “If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” We get the chance to start over! We’re not trapped by what we have been and what we have done.

Once we decide to follow Jesus, we live differently than we did before we became Christ’s followers. Paul draws the contrast for us—the old life and the new life--in Galatians 5:16-26.

Paul begins this portion of scripture telling us our new life in Christ also brings freedom. But, he warns, we must careful not to misuse our freedom, we must be careful not to produce bad fruit. He then provides us a list of some of those ways we could misuse our freedom, living the way we used to live. You can read those in Galatians 5:16-21.

- ◇ I want us to focus on the good fruit we bear.  
Eugene Peterson in *The Message* describes this new life this way: “We take on an entirely new way of life—a God-

fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into (y)our conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in us/you. (*The Message* Ephesians 4:24)

- ◇ Paul describes the good fruit, the fruit of the Spirit, in Galatians 5:22-26  
He lists the fruit of God’s Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness/generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

For the next several Sundays, we’ll be looking at each one of the attributes of our new life, of living a God-fashioned life.

Today we’re starting with patience. Why patience? Love is the first of the nine attributes listed in Galatians 5:22, so why start with patience?

When we become Christ’s followers, we are offered new life. But we don’t become like Jesus overnight! As Peterson phrased the verse in Ephesians, our renewed life starts inside us and is working itself into our conduct. God is working on accurately reproducing God’s character in us. It isn’t a quick fix. It’s like a child learning to read; it takes months and maybe even years. For most of us, becoming like Jesus takes a life time, and that requires patience.

You have a flower bulb this morning. Think what has to happen for that flower bulb to become a plant and then blossom.

- ◇ This fall we plant the bulb, and we wait
- ◇ In the spring, with the right conditions—temperature, rain, sunshine, the bulb begins to grow  
We see a plant break through the ground  
We watch as the plant grows  
At the right time, a bud develops and then the bud blossoms
- ◇ The bulb we planted so many months ago has produced a beautiful, fragrant flower

Think what has to happen from holding a bulb in your hand today until you see the flower. That requires patience.

We are to be patient –reproducing God’s character within us.  
Perhaps we need to be reminded of God’s character.

- ◇ Patience is the attitude of God and Jesus towards people, towards us.
  - God’s patience bears with our sinning, chooses not to cast us off  
“The Lord is not slow in doing what he promised—the way some people understand slowness. But God is being patient with you. He does not want anyone to be lost, but he wants all people to change their hearts and lives.” 2 Peter 3:9
  - Remember the parable of the prodigal/lost son? Luke 15:11-24? The father waited for his son. He patiently waited until the son came to his senses and returned home.
  - Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” Jesus says. Have you seen a painting depicting this verse? Many renditions show the door having no exterior handle. Jesus is waiting patiently for us to open the door from the inside.
  - Scripture reminds us to be patient with God – Psalm 37:7-9
    - Wait and trust the Lord. Don’t be upset when others get rich or when someone else’s plans succeed. Don’t get angry. Don’t be upset; it only leads to trouble. Evil people will be sent away, but those who trust the Lord will inherit the land.
    - We can have patience because: God is our unshakeable foundation (Sunday, Aug. 27)  
We can have patience because: We do get paid/will be paid for the work we do for the Lord. We are working as for the Lord.
- ◇ In a culture governed by deadlines, by the clock, we may need to be reminded God’s work occurs on God’s schedule, not ours

- Elijah, an Old Testament prophet, remained obedient to God, even when Jezebel, King Ahab’s wife, sought to kill him  
He remained obedient even when he was the only prophet of God left alive  
He went into hiding, living at a widow’s house, waiting for God to act  
He lived in a cave – waiting for God to speak  
And God spoke, and Elijah had to continue waiting  
Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal – whose sacrifice would God accept?  
Then Elijah waited as the small cloud on the horizon grew larger and larger, and the storm consumed the sacrifice on the alter he had built

- ◇ Patience is waiting until later to get what we want now –
  - Remember Christmas as a child, seeing packages and wanting to open them right now to see what special present is inside. But we had to be patient.
  - We live in a society of instant gratification – patience is not required
    - ‘It’s my money, and I want it now!’ J.G. Wentworth commercial offering lump sum cash payouts in place of a structured settlements. Usually you will have to accept less than the amount you would have had over time. For example, for a structured settlement of \$10,000 payable over 10 years, J.G. Wentworth might offer \$7500 now. (Provision in the state of New York as J.G. Wentworth was being established)  
A long-term gain was sacrificed for a smaller short-term gain.
    - We can watch a movie or television programs wherever and whenever we want—on our laptop computers, our tablets, our smartphones
    - 24-hour restaurants/stores/gyms
    - Order online, receive your order the next day

Let's go back to scripture and re-visit the story of Joseph in Egypt. Sold by his brothers to Midianite traders on their way to Egypt, Joseph was sold again in Egypt. He worked as a servant for Potiphar until Potiphar's wife got a bit too friendly and had him imprisoned when he rejected her. In prison his ability to interpret dreams came to the attention of Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer. His interpretations came true: the cupbearer was released; the baker killed. Yet the cupbearer forgot about Joseph. Perhaps years later, when Pharaoh needed someone to interpret his dreams, the cupbearer finally remember Joseph and he was released from prison. Years of waiting, of having to be patient through servitude, imprisonment, feast and famine, until Joseph again saw his family

◇ We are to be patient with others— not needing to have our way all the time

- Patience is related to submission, one of those spiritual practices we talked about a few weeks ago. Patience is waiting without complaining. Patience is not getting angry when we feel we are being overlooked in a restaurant or store
- Road-rage is the opposite of patience: my timing, my right of way on the road, etc.
- Patience is not being in a hurry to get my house in Portland sold
- Being with children requires patience
  - children have their own sense of time
  - In a store, misbehavior may be something other than defiance. It may be they are tired, hungry, overwhelmed by so many sights and sounds.

We become impatient when child becomes impatient; And yet, did you see the pictures of the lines created by disaster conditions preparing for Hurricane Irma: lines for shelter, for gasoline, for supplies, on the highways out of the impact area. Overall, what displays of patience! 5

Patience, God is reproducing God's character in us – and it takes time

- ◇ We are to practice patience with God – God has a plan for us, for the world. God's plan doesn't always fit our expectations, or our timing
- ◇ We are to practice patience with one another – submitting what we want to the needs of others

By developing and practicing patience, we become more like Jesus. We grow closer to God.

- ◇ As Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 17:8, when we are connected with God, we are like a tree planted by a stream, with deep roots, ever fresh and ever yielding fruit, even in times of drought.

Through Jesus Christ, God offers us new life. Through God's Spirit we grow into being more like God. Our growth requires patience: with God, with others, with ourselves.

John Newton, who once captained ships transporting slaves, accepted God's forgiveness and penned the words of Amazing Grace. In Newton's journey, we can recognize our own:

"I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am"

God give us patience—and we know what that means! This week we'll find ourselves in situations requiring patience, even when we would rather be impatient. God give us patience anyway.

