

New St. James Presbyterian Church, London, Ontario
PWS&D Sunday, February 3, 2019
Rev. Dr. David Thompson

Developing Patience: Now! ☺

The new minister, who was an impatient man, was in the middle of a sermon when he suddenly beckoned to the head usher to come over to the pulpit.

He whispered to the usher: “For two weeks I have put up with this man snoring through my sermon. I am through with putting up with this. He is in the third row. You go and wake him up.”

The Head usher replied "You put him to sleep. You wake him up.”

St Paul says:

“Suffering brings patience, and patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings character, and character hope. And this hope is not deceptive.”

Tolstoy, the famous Russian author of War and Peace, which is famous for its tremendous length, must have learned patience in that arduous process of writing. He said that the two most powerful warriors are *patience and time*.

How many a city has fallen eventually to a long siege with these two warriors against them? What do these two warriors have to tell us about Afghanistan, Iraq or the whole Middle East and how the West and the UN must proceed if peace is to prevail there?

Perhaps today you have a persistent personal problem. Try Patience and time!

John Dryden poet laureate of England in the late 1600's became a very politically astute man. This is what he said about patience: “Beware the fury of a patient man!”

He was arguing that we can be both furious and patient at the same time.

And this is a very powerful thing to do because the anger provides the fuel and the patience the continued pressure. Beware of such a person he cautions!

This is the sort of sermon that I preach first to myself. For instance, it took a lot of patience to fill out the forms for customs for my return to Canada. It took many hours and I grew impatient with all the bureaucracy! But when I got to the border there was a sudden reward for the patience it took. The custom's officer took one look at the detail in my paper work, stamped it, and waved me through. The next guy had to go through all his stuff, fill out the forms and state the value of everything he was bringing into the country. I sailed to the car rental and was on my way in five minutes. Lesson learned? I think so partially. Over the years I still struggle with it, but I think that I have grown little more patient, so if you are impatient as a person let me tell you there is hope.

You know the difficulties!

How many of us end up waiting for our spouse or our child to get ready for an event? You hate to be late and your spouse apparently couldn't care less. You have spoken to them in the past about punctuality and nobody seems to get the memo! And it puts stress on your marriage.

What compounds the issue is that different people have a different sense of time. Contrast a small-town dweller with someone who lives in the fast pace of a Metropolis. Older retirees who do not have a pressing agenda, can be frustrating to someone who is short of time and overloaded at work. In fact, it can be frustrating in both directions and we can get impatient.

Some spouses work hard all day and come home exhausted. The other spouse had a great day and is all ready to party and go out. The other spouse just wants to be a coach potato. If this happens often the frustrations rise, and patience goes out the window.

When it comes to repairing things how patient are you?

When one man's printer began to grow faint, he called a local repair shop where a friendly man informed him that the printer probably needed only to be cleaned. Because the store charged \$50.00 for a cleaning, the man told him he might be better off reading the printer's manual and trying the job himself.

Pleasantly surprised, the potential customer asked, "Does your boss know that you discourage business?"

The friendly man said: "Actually, I am not supposed to tell you this, but it is my boss's idea. You see people **are so impatient** when it comes to repairing things. So, we usually make more money on repairs, if we let people try to fix things for themselves first!"

St. Paul suffered a lot for his faith: imprisonments, beatings, whippings, running for his life, being shipwrecked and eventually being chained to a Roman soldier in prison and finally sentenced to death in Rome. But this same St. Paul says that we can be happy about suffering if we view it right.

St. Paul had to learn patience like the rest of us. St. Paul was at his brilliant best on this one, for he links several qualities together in a progression.

First of all, there is **suffering** of some kind that we have to deal with. One of the lessons of suffering is that suffering becomes our teacher in the difficult school of learning patience.

For instance, when we suffer from a physical pain that we cannot cure, we discover that being impatient with it solves nothing; whereas patience can hold out the best hope for a cure.

Then St. Paul says we must **persevere**. **Perseverance and patience** are like twins; they are not identical twins, but they grow up together.

St. Francis De Sales, Catholic Bishop of Geneva in the 1600's said that "**Patience and perseverance** have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.

St. Paul argues that **patience and perseverance build character**. These two build our souls which is the purpose of our being here on this planet. This planet as a soul builder has no equal in the universe! And these two, **perseverance and patience** work side by side to build our **character**.

Once **character** has been built in this way it connects to a **hope** that is not deceptive, because it is a **hope** that has been through the fire!

So what St. Paul is arguing for here is a **process**, not a quick fix. It begins with suffering of some kind but ends with authentic hope. If we ever lose hope, we don't want to continue to live, so hope is VERY important. It is also very important that the hope not deceive us but be authentic.

The glue in this process is **patience**. Without it there is no **progress** and suffering can become pointless when there is no hope. This is St. Paul at his most profound.

Jesus tells us a story about a patient farmer. He sows his seed and then goes on with his regular life. There is no frustration here or impatience with the seed not growing fast enough. The farmer does not go out into the field and dig the seed up to see if it has roots yet. Actually, he appears to do nothing, except for one very important thing: **he waits patiently!**

This is an active watchful response because the farmer knows that timing is everything. When it is time to harvest, he wastes no time putting the sickle in.

Ecclesiastes says; "To everything there is a season under heaven."

What is Jesus saying here?

The Kingdom of God, which means the rule of God in this world, is like seed buried in the ground. God's will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven because the seed, which is the teaching of Jesus about who God is and how to connect with God is sown in the soil of history. Jesus actually lived, died and rose again in our history for a purpose. And that purpose was to find you and me and give us hope for despair, meaning for our lives rather than a sense of futility, and recovery and healing for our damaged spirits through forgiveness.

Jesus says to us: Trust that. Be patient! Peace will come to the earth and the meek shall inherit the earth. There is a god who loves you and cares about you. Trust that. Be patient! Your good is coming!

What does the patient farmer rely on? The seed grows secretly, miraculously. In the parable all we have to do is plant it and wait for the harvest. God's timing may not be ours. Be patient. For whatever dream you have, give it to God and then wait on God. Plant the seed, water it if you need to but don't dig it up to watch it grow. Have faith. Wait. It will come to pass in God's time and when it does. Reap!

I think that patience is rather like going shopping at a huge Supermarket. I think that patience is there for us on a shelf, but we have to take it down and put it in our shopping cart. Its no good to us on the shelf, but it is there for the taking. We can decide to be patient in exactly the same way as we can decide to be happy. **For patience is a decision!**

Dottie Walters who had been homeless as a child got married in the recession that followed World War Two. They had what they needed: 2 babies, a home, a car and the usual payments. Then the bottom fell out and there was no money for anything or even food.

She had no college education, but she had been editor of the high school newspaper. She thought she might get a job at the local newspaper but that didn't pan out. Yet she persisted. She wondered if she might sell advertising for the newspaper in a shopper's column and they agreed to let her try.

She trundled off with her stroller, with the wheel that kept coming off. She had no babysitter, so she went down the country roads with the stroller, trying to sell advertising to small town merchants.

The idea began to work, and she was able to cover her house payments. She even managed to buy an old car and hire a high school girl to babysit from three to five every afternoon.

She worked on four advertising prospects and all four had turned her down. When she asked why, they all said that the President of the Chamber of Commerce and owner of the drug store did not advertise with her. They felt that if he did not advertise with her there must be something wrong with her method. She really needed these prospects but there seemed to be no hope.

Determined to persevere she decided to approach this Mr. Ahlman to try to get him to advertise with her. He had always refused even to see her in the past.

This time he was behind the counter in the store and so Dottie put on her best smile and held up her precious shopper's column and said: "Mr. Ahlman, everybody respects your opinion. If you will, would you just look at my work for a moment so that I can tell other merchants what you think of the idea?"

Ahlman simply shook his head and said; "No!"

Suddenly all her enthusiasm left her. She made it over to the soda fountain and sat down. With her last dime she ordered a cherry coke. Would she have to lose her home and put her babies out on the street? She remembered what it was like as a child and shuddered. Maybe she was just a dud and didn't have any talent, and she began to weep.

A soft voice on the soda stool beside her said: What's the matter dear?"

Dottie looked up into the kind face of a lovely grey-haired woman. Dottie poured out her story and ended with “ But Mr. Ahlman who everyone respects so much will not look at my work.”

The woman said: “ Let me look at your shopper’s column.” She looked at the carefully marked newspaper and read it all thoroughly.

Then she spun around on her stool, stood up, looked back at the prescriptions counter and in a commanding voice said: “Ruben Ahlman come here!” The lady was Mrs. Ahlman!

She told him to buy the advertising from Dottie. And he agreed. Then she asked for the names of the 4 people who had turned Dottie down. She went to the phone and called each one. She gave Dottie a hug and told her that they were waiting for her to pick up their advertising.

This story of **patience and persistence** was a turning point there on the stools of a soda fountain. Dottie’s advertising business grew to four offices with 285 employees serving 4,000 continuous contract advertising accounts. The harvest of patience and persistence had come!

One day Mr. Ahlman’s drugstore was to be remodelled.

Dottie’s husband found out about it and bought the old mahogany Soda fountain with its nine stools and installed it in Dottie’s California office...

Dottie often says that if you are ever in California and you wanted an encouraging story of persistence, she would sit you down on one of her stools, pour you a cherry coke and tell you never to give up; to try another path around; to find another person who can give you a third party endorsement; and finally she would give you Bill Marriott’s secret that enabled him to build all the Marriott hotels:

“Failure? I never encountered it. All I ever met were temporary setbacks.”

As St. Paul said **suffering brings patience, patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings character and character hope. And this hope is not deceptive.”**

In other words, patience works in our spirits as we live in the physical world of the planet and the human world we have built. It can make all the difference. Benjamin Franklin once said; “ The person who can have patience can have what they will.”

So, take patience off the shelf today, put it in your shopping cart and take it home and use it to season your life. Trust God for your life, your heart and all your dreams. You will be more than glad that you did. And when the harvest comes, put in your sickle and reap!

Thanks for being patient enough to listen.

Amen