

God is Patient

- I. Patience is a communicable attribute – one we are able to reflect...or are we?
 - a. Not only are we living in a very impatient age, but we are living in a time and culture that works against patience in many ways.
 - b. Google, Amazon shipping...stimulus check...Ryan's bike...
 - c. Wilkin Boston Globe article on human attention spans: How long people will wait for an internet page to load...users began to bail after a 2 second wait time, after 25 seconds 25% bailed, at 10 seconds 50% bailed...Research shows our attention span has shrunk from 12 seconds in 2000 to 8 seconds in 2015. This means our attention span is officially shorter than that of a goldfish by 1 second!

Wilkin: "We are familiar with the maxim that patience is a virtue, but it is a virtue rarely sought. The world's solution to the problem of impatience is not to develop patience, but to eliminate as many situations that require it as possible."

So more than ever we need to look to God and his patience to grow.

- II. God as Patient
 - a. Definition: Edward Leigh a 17th century puritan writer defined God's patience as this: "The patience of God is that attribute whereby he bears the reproach of sinner and defers their punishments; or it is the most bountiful will of God, whereby he does long bear with sin which he hates, sparing sinners, not minding their destruction, but that he might bring them to repentance."
 - b. 2 Pet. 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."
 - c. Charnock "Goodness sets God upon the exercise of patience, and patience sets many a sinner on running into the arms of mercy."
 - d. Samuel Bolton "If but any tender-hearted man should sit on hour in the Throne of the Almighty, and look down upon the earth as God does continually, and see what abominations are done in that hour, he would undoubtedly in the next set all the world on fire."

We quickly get impatient with others because they aren't doing things as we think they should, and our desires are sinful. God's desires are perfect and yet he is always patient with us...

- e. Scripture

As we turn to scripture we see that the patience of God is often explained as being slow to anger.

i. About God:

1. Neh. 9:17 “They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them...”
2. Nah. 1:3 The Lord is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet.

ii. About us:

1. Proverbs

- a. 14:29 Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.
- b. 15:18 A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.
- c. 16:32 Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.
- d. 19:11 A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.
- e. James 1:19-10 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

iii. Story of Jonah – 4:1-4 (you see God’s patience, and his sovereignty...)

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the Lord, “Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

4 But the Lord replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

III. Jesus:

- a. Look at Jesus life:
 - i. Lived 33 years side-by-side with sinners and only got angry twice...
 - ii. Think about his interactions with the disciples – James and John ask to sit at his right and left, Peter is a dufus, lived and loved the one who would betray him...
 - iii. The cross is the perfect picture of God’s patience towards us.

1 Tim. 1:16

“But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”

Wilkin: “When we view our own salvation as an expression and example of the perfect patience of Christ, we begin to desire that our lives thereafter would exemplify that patience, as well. We begin to wait patiently on the Lord. We begin to bear patiently with others, even those who are the foremost among sinners.”

IV. Us:

All this should challenge us, but more than that, it should melt us in patience toward God, others, and ourselves.

- a. We miscount...
 - i. When it comes to our impatience Wilkin wisely points to the ways we are bad at math – our impatience stems from how we count the cost of things – cost to *our* time, *our* wallets, *our* egos...She writes:

“How often do you look at parts of your life and say: ‘This is taking longer than I expected,’ or ‘This is harder than I expected.’...”

Each of us has areas in our lives where, when it comes to estimating the cost, we miscalculate with vigor. We think marriage will give us bliss at a negligible cost. We think parenting will give our lives deep meaning at no expense. We think ministry or work will give us purpose without requiring much in return. Upon discovering the costly nature of a commitment, we lose patience and long only for it to improve or terminate in the shortest time possible...

- b. God never miscounts...

Yet God has never looked at the ongoing sin in your life and said: ‘This is taking longer than I expected.’ Or he has never looked at the troubles of this world and thought, ‘This is harder than I expected.’”
- c. The Church as Patient (Jesus’ body)

And finally, before looking at a few questions for reflection and closing in prayer, Wilkin gives us one other insight that I think is wonderful and timely – especially for us as a Third church family. She writes this:

“The church must be a bastion of patience. As the rest of the world chases the next new thing every eight seconds or less, we much be those who turn our eyes toward the long view. We much be known for our staying power when loving our neighbors takes longer than we expected and is harder than we thought. It takes patience to run with endurance, but that is the race the world needs to see us run. It may just be what catches and holds there attention in a goldfish world. Let patience be found among the people of God. He is not finished with us yet.”

Thank you for you patience! Patience with renewal, COVID, others...

Verses:

Psalm 37:7

Romans 15:4-5

2 Peter 3:14-15

Psalm 86:15

Colossians 3:12-13

1 Cor. 13

Questions for Reflection

1. Think of the person who is most likely to try your patience. What wrong expectations might be contributing your lack of patience with him or her? How does the example of Christ instruct you to reframe your expectations?
2. Reflect on Proverbs 19:11. How well does the term “slow to anger” describe you? What do you fear you will lose by choosing to overlook an offense?
3. How has a time of trial produced patience in you in a way you might not otherwise have developed it? What did you learn about God during that process? How did that experience change the way you understand the patience of Christ?
4. How have you known the patience of God as you have wrestled with ongoing sin in you own life? What does it look like to be patient with the sanctification process without excusing sin? Give an example.
5. What does patience look right for you right now?

Pray

Pray for God to cultivate patience in your heart and life. Pray that he will reveal the impatience in your life and that he will further show you and open you to his great patience for you! Confess your impatience and more deeply receive the God’s pardoning love that has always been there – patient waiting for you to see and enjoy it more and more!