

9/17/23

PATIENCE

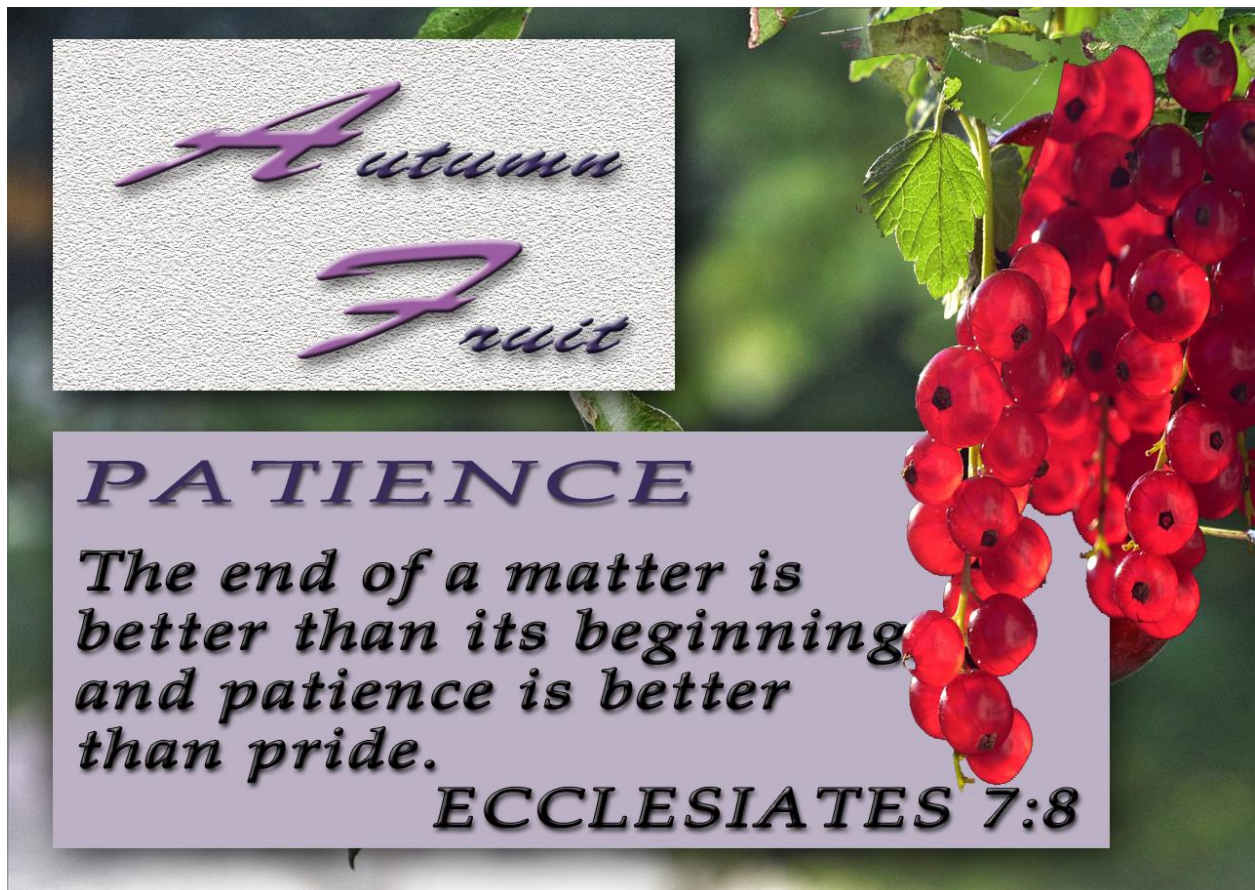
Ecclesiastes 7:8

**The end of a matter is better than its beginning,
and patience is better than pride.**

Special Music: "While I Wait"

Music Meets Heaven

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NswPPVgMaPE>



PATIENCE

I sit on a chair and watch the paint dry.

I need no excuse or alibi.

In order to complete the task at hand

And be successful at what I've planned

First, I must allow the paint must dry.

From the porch I watch the green grass grow

I cut that grass just a week ago

It may seem funny and not quite right

Before cutting again it must be four inches high

So, I sit on the porch and watch the green grass grow.

I have a need to boil some eggs

The water is hot but hasn't got legs

It's true that the water must boil

Bubble and burp with tumultuous roil

I watch the water so I can boil eggs

I had a vase that was a brilliant deep blue
But it broke so I fixed it with mending glue
Then I grabbed a book and pulled up a chair
And without a thought or nary a care
I waited for the glue to set true.

I prayed a prayer expecting reply.
I envisioned the answer in my mind's eye.
I waited and waited, then waited some more
I felt that God has put my prayer on ignore
So, after twenty minutes, no more did I try.

We'll lay in wait for the paint to dry
And for the grass to grow so it can get high
We'll wait for the water
We'll wait for the glue
But we lose our patience when our prayer is denied.

The older we get, the more we can wait

We know that God's answers will never be late

But such wisdom is learned

As the years slowly turn

For patience is a gift from God's plate.

Like every other boy my age growing up, I was into models. All kinds of models. I bought whatever I could afford at the time. I would walk up and down the hobby aisle of the 5 & dime looking at everything that was there. My dad encouraged this hobby and even helped me at times, although I preferred to build them alone. It probably had something to do with pride. I built planes, cars, ships, and anything else I could afford in the moment. The really big models were always on the bottom shelf, and they were the most expensive. I would eye the ridiculously difficult model of the U.S.S. Constitution which I knew I would never be able to afford, and then I would pick a WWII battleship or a WWI biplane. I distinctly remember getting an F-111 which really excited me, because that was the plane my dad was working on at General Dynamics.

When I first started out, I was like any male looking at a box of parts with the nearby directions. I didn't need directions. I knew where the wings and wheels went on an airplane, and I knew what the bottom and the top of a boat looked like. I knew the basic parts of a car. Who needed directions? But after my first few abject failures, I allowed my dad to help. I really made a mess of those first few projects. I used way too much glue. And in my desire to hurry the project along, I wouldn't let the glue set long enough. And I always seemed to wind up with extra pieces, somehow.

But my dad taught me the art of patience, using the glue in the right amount as the stud points and then waiting for the glue to dry before moving on. How to sand off the excess glue. How much paint to use and where. How to carefully apply decals. He made a strong point for taking time to read the

directions before I got started. At one point, I had a pretty sizeable collection of decent looking models. My dad encouraged me in two directions. 1) It isn't a sign of stupidity to take time to read the directions before you get started. This carried over when I started having to build IKEA furniture later on. 2) He emphasized that it is never a mistake to have the patience to wait. Wait for the glue to set. Wait to complete one piece before beginning a second piece. Wait for the paint to dry before applying more.

The older I got, the more this common sense hit home. I learned these two points applied to working on my car. Repairing the lawn mower. Fixing broken furniture. Working on music. Doing photography. Writing computer code. Building graphics. Preaching and Christian service. It is what separates doing a good job from doing an okay job. It also applies to the way we handle life in general.

We live in a world that does not value patience. While patience may grant us greater reward in the things that we do, so many would rather not have to wait for the results. We wait at the grocery store. We wait at the dentist. We wait in line for services. We wait at the doctor's office and the hospital. We wait for the light to turn green. We wait for other people to make up their minds. And most of the time we do not wait patiently. Waiting often permits us to indulge in negative thoughts. "That person is so slow!" "The store needs more checkers." "There are too many people in the self-checkout line." "I wish those people would quit gabbing and move on."

I remember how much I used to hate having x-rays taken. It required so much patience with the technician as they adjusted the equipment and made me stand or lie in awkward positions. And then I would have to wait hours for the film to develop so the technician could tell me if we need to do it again. All while I wondered if I had broken a bone or if they were able to spot the root cause of my distress. In today's digital world, it takes minutes.

As we grow older, most of us learn to cope with waiting. We know we can't change it. If we want the goods or services, there will probably at least a little wait time. And the higher the quality generally means the longer the wait.

**The end of a matter is better than its beginning,
and patience is better than pride**

What is this verse from Ecclesiastes trying to tell us? Why is the end of a matter better than its beginning? How does that translate into today's world where waiting is the norm?

We walk into the DMV and we take a number. The number is 124. And then the person with the microphone calls out the next number to be serviced, and that number is 17. Our hearts just melt. We weren't planning on spending our entire day at the DMV. But after sitting in an intentionally uncomfortable chair (I have to believe that the intended purpose of such chairs is to torture us while we wait) for over an hour, suddenly the number 123 is called, and we know that we are next in line and our spirit lifts. And when our number is called a few minutes later we feel triumphant that we have survived the torture and have achieved

victory. Suddenly our whole demeanor changes. **“The end of a matter is better than its beginning.”**

“And patience is better than pride.” What in the world does that mean? **“patience better than pride.”** One of the things that most test our patience is our pride. We have a tendency to believe that our time is more valuable than the people in line in front of us. **“I left my child at home and need to get back to her.”** **“I left dinner in the oven.”** **“I’m an important person and shouldn’t have to wait like these others.”** **“Lord, I am glad that I am not like these other people. They should realize how ridiculous it is to keep me waiting.”**

When the actual truth is, we are more like those others who are waiting than we realize, and they are just as frustrated as we are feeling that their time is being wasted. Our pride often makes us value ourselves and our time over the value and time of others. That is not the way Jesus did things. And it is not the way we should be doing things either.

In Luke 8:42-48 we find this well-known story:

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him.

43 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her.

44 She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

45 “Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.”

46 But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.”

47 Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.

48 Then he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

Usually, when we talk about this story, we discuss the woman’s faith. But I want to focus on Jesus for a moment because what Christ does here is so very vital to us understanding how God wants us to view patience.

Jesus and his disciples are on the way to the house of Jairus, a synagogue leader whose daughter had fallen deathly ill. So, there was some sense of urgency here. Jesus and his disciples are surrounded by crowds of people which slows this attempt to reach the young girl even more. And while Jesus is perfectly calm, you can sense that his disciples are anxious and not being very patient towards the crowd. They must have often felt that part of their responsibility was to make sure the Jesus got from one place to another place unimpeded.

In the middle of all this chaos, Jesus suddenly stops. That must have really thrown his disciples for a loop. They wanted him to hurry up so he could save the girl. But Jesus is not impatient. He stops and addresses the crowd around him. **“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.** You know that the disciples must have been telling themselves that this was a ridiculous moment to be asking such a question. Lots of people were touching Jesus and pressing up against him. But, to the disciples, Jesus was too important to stop and deal with such foolishness when there were important matters to be attended to.

But Jesus is not in a hurry. He stops and takes time to have an encounter with this woman whose faith was so strong that she believed that she could be healed just by touching the hem of his garment. Jesus was not going to be rushed. He refused to leave the impression that he was too busy to deal with the woman in front of him. This was where his focus was at that moment. This woman needed for Jesus to acknowledge her and Jesus knew that.

Yes, the overall story here was much bigger than this woman. But Jesus stopped to let the glue and the paint dry. Rushing to take care of the bigger picture would have left this woman’s needs unfulfilled. And he dealt with the encounter with patience.

Why is patience so important for us as Christians? Do we get so focused on the bigger picture of finishing a project that we can’t find the time to handle the things that come up while we are waiting for the glue to dry? “I haven’t got the time to stop and help you now. Maybe later.” “Why are you bothering me

when you know I have so very much to do?” “I simply don’t have the time to be patient with you right now.”

If Jesus can find time to patiently deal with a woman in a crowd at a time when life and death hung in the balance at Jairus’ house, why would we think our time is so important that we can’t do the same?

From an Autumn Fruit perspective, practicing patience throughout our lives lets us embrace lives of patience as we grow older. What we found so nerve-racking and caused us so much distress earlier in life, we can now often take in stride. That is assuming that we have actively leaned into the lessons of patience. Does that mean we will never lose our patience? Of course not. We’re still human. But we learn from the pitfalls of our impatience, and that allows us to often find better options than becoming overwhelmed. There is nothing positive that comes from road rage or face-to-face encounters of hubris.

I do want to stress another point here. When we become patient with imperfect situations, situations where we are forced to wait, situations where people are intolerant of us, we tend to push those people away. That is the easiest way we can think of to ease our impatience, to calm our nerves. We believe that if we remove the object or person causing us to lose our cool, that we can regain our composure. And while that can make us feel more comfortable at the time, it does not resolve the issue itself. If we are impatient in the doctor’s office and we remove ourselves, we don’t get to see the doctor, even if the need is great. If we leave the DMV angry and frustrated before our number is called, we don’t get our driver’s license renewed. If we get tired of waiting at the grocery

and just throw up our hands and leave our cart and walk out, then we don't get the groceries we need. We must find that place in ourselves that allows us to accomplish what needs to be accomplished, even when the situation becomes unbearable to us.

Jesus was able to do it. And he shows us how he expects for us to do it. Perhaps when we feel put upon or forced into an unbearable situation, we need to remember that. We no longer belong to ourselves. Our pride has no place in our relationship with our Creator. We have purpose in what we are meant to accomplish through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are given a higher calling than to let our lack of patience rule our thoughts and minds.

This week, I want us to think on that. What do we find frustrating in our lives that puts us on the edge of losing our patience? How can we prevent ourselves from reaching that point? Paul tells us to "pray without ceasing." It is difficult to be impatient at the moment we are praying and if we find ourselves too aggravated and impatient to pray, then maybe our focus is on this world rather than the place that God has prepared for us. At the same time, people are always watching us. We may not think so, but those who know that we carry the banner of Christ are looking to see how we handle our frustrations. We are to example Christ in all that we do, especially the moments that try our very souls.

If we will turn our eyes upon Jesus, allowing him to guide our minds and our steps, we can avoid many of the pitfalls that lead us to impatience. I beg us all to embrace that strength and that comfort. It will change the way we see the world around us. It will change how we react to the unpleasantness that we often

face. Creation is a beautiful thing when we see world and the people around us through the eyes of Jesus.

**The end of a matter is better than its beginning,
and patience is better than pride.**

God bless you all.

AMEN

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