

“When You Just Can’t Grin and Bear It”

James 5:7-11

Series: *BELIEVE Chapter 26 Patience*

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Two Sundays back I felt besieged by a perfect storm of technology. I arrived early to get ready and found my desktop computer had problems. We just upgraded our network server. I went up to the balcony and found that computer had problems. We just upgraded our projection software. The next morning I came into the office and found the internet was completely down. I couldn’t email, search the web, use wifi or reach my files in the cloud. I couldn’t do anything. Why? We upgraded our internet modem. I was frazzled and frustrated. I couldn’t bear it. So I decided to sit down at my desk and prepare my sermon the old fashioned way by opening a book. What was the subject of the next sermon in Believe? Patience.

The Key Idea in Believe is “I am slow to anger and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.” The key verse is

Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly. (Proverbs 14:29)

We all lose our patience. The Associated Press surveyed over a 1000 adults about impatience. They found:

- While waiting in line at an office or store, it takes an average of 17 minutes for most people to lose their patience.
- Women lost their patience after waiting in line for about 18 minutes.
- For men, it was an average of 15 minutes.
- On the phone, it takes about 9 minutes for most people to lose their patience.
- People with lower income and less education are more patient than those with a college education and a high income.¹

Despite my frustration with technology, the increasing speed of the internet is actually training us to be less patient. An article in the Boston Globe states:

Retailers are jumping into same-day delivery services. Smartphone apps eliminate the wait for a cab, a date, or a table at a restaurant. But experts caution that instant gratification comes at a price: It's making us less patient. One researcher examined the viewing habits of 6.7 million internet users. How long were subjects willing to be patient? Two seconds. After that they started abandoning the site. After five seconds, the abandonment rate is 25 percent. When you get to 10 seconds, half are gone." The results offer a glimpse into the future. As Internet speeds increase, people will be even less willing to wait for that cute puppy video.

¹ Trevor Thompson, "Impatience Poll Glance," www.hosted.ap.org (5-28-06).

The researcher, who spent years developing the study, worries someday people will be too impatient to conduct studies on patience.²

During this last part of BELIEVE, we learn when you receive God's unconditional love it fills you with joy. Joy – a feeling of contentment which lasts regardless of the circumstances – leads to peace which reduces our anxiety, self-control which frees us from habits and addictions, and hope which helps us cope with the hardships of life. Patience is the next fruit God wants to grow in your life. And we can all use patience especially in those moments when you feel trapped.

From the outside this 18-month-old Platinum-edition Sequoia SUV looks perfect. Yet when the owner from Waterton Park south of Calgary, Canada opens the door he discovers his Toyota is totaled. Somehow, a grizzly bear was able to open the door. Once inside, he must have pulled the door shut and trapped himself.

Now try to picture the scene. Frustrated beyond belief, frantic to escape, the bear begins clawing his way to freedom by ripping off all the door panels. As he tears through the wiring alarm bells sound, voices cry and sparks fly. He shreds the head-liner, headrests, leather seats, and dash board. The steering column is twisted sideways. At some point, two of the six airbags explode and pummel the bear. He fights back by puncturing the other four airbags. Then, just before he breaks through the rear window and escapes he leaves his calling card. The insurance company stopped counting the cost of the repairs when they rose above the \$70,000 cost of the car.

Do you ever feel trapped? How do you find patience when you can't grin and bear it? Maybe someone else set the trap. Maybe, like the bear, you locked yourself in. Either way, you lose all your patience. You are seized with the sudden urge to claw your way to freedom. Patience is one of those things I'm afraid to ask God to give me. If I pray, "Please God, make me more patient," He may send me annoying people to teach me how to be patient. Rick Warren says there are four ways to test your patience. Which of these bother you the most?

- A. Interruptions – things or people getting in the way of your plan for the day.
- B. Inconveniences – break downs or disruptions which detour your schedule.
- C. Irritations – annoying habits of others that get on your nerves.
- D. Inactivity – waiting and waiting and waiting for something to happen.

We all want patience and we want it NOW! But that's not the way patience works. It takes time to develop this fruit of the Spirit. The word patience originally meant "to endure suffering." Why do we suffer and feel pain? Two reasons: Events don't follow our plans or our timetable. Maybe you're waiting to get pregnant, to find a job, to find someone to love, to get the test results back, to hear what the judge has to say, to finish school, to heal a relationship, to discover your purpose in life. Maybe you're tired of this physical pain or illness, of arguing with your parents, your spouse, your children, of

² Christopher Muther, "Instant gratification is making us perpetually impatient," The Boston Globe (2-2-13)

being lonely. How do you grow the fruit of patience? It begins with a God engineered attitude adjustment.

The Bible has two words for patience. The first attitude adjustment applies to the **Patience of the Powerful** and the guidance is **Forgive and Let Go**. This applies to those situations where you caught someone doing wrong, they are in your debt, you are about to let them have it, come down on them hard, read the riot act and, instead, you forgive and let them go. Joseph could have punished his brothers for selling him into slavery. Instead he forgave them and saved them from starvation. David had the chance to kill Saul who persecuted and pursued him from one end of the country to the other. Instead he let him go. In this type of patience you have someone in your sights. Yet instead of pummeling them, you pardon them.

James was the younger brother of Jesus. It must have been very tough growing up with Jesus as your older brother. You could never blame anything on Mr. Perfect. Your parents always sided with Him. Instead of punching you back He always forgave you. Yet those lessons left an impression on James which he passed on to the believers.

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:7-9).

James uses two parables here: the farmer and the judge. Farming requires patience and waiting. So much is out of your control. You rely on the rain, seed, soil, and sun. And they make you wait. If anyone thinks patience means sitting back and doing nothing – ask a farmer. They work very hard while waiting for the rain and sun to do their part.

We get impatient when circumstances are beyond our control and the greatest temptation is to start grumbling and complaining. Grumbling is our brilliant idea about what others did wrong and how it should be fixed. Unfortunately no one else appreciates the brilliance of our way. Grumbling divides families, churches, schools, businesses, communities and nations. Instead of grumbling, the Bible says to forgive. James heard Jesus tell a story about a King and Judge who forgave one of his servants a huge debt he could never repay. Yet that servant turned around and threw a friend in jail for a couple of bucks. When the King and Judge heard this, He threw the first servant into jail (Matthew 18:21-35). What's the point? No matter what debt someone owes you, God forgives you far more in Jesus. Does that mean God wants you to cancel every debt? No. But instead of grumbling and punishing others, work patiently with them.

Ask God to help you see the situation the way He sees it. When you do, you discover a new perspective.

1. I am only human. I make mistakes. I'm not God and most things I cannot control.

2. Other people are human and also imperfect. I should not be surprised or upset when people eventually make mistakes and let me down.
3. God is in control and working to use my problem to accomplish His purpose for me.

Paul writes, “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13).

The second word in the Bible applies to the **Patience of the Painful** and here the guidance is **Forbear and Hold On**. James continues:

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy (James 5:10-11).

Perhaps right now you are under the heavy pressure of a burden which is beyond your ability to bear. Your child is heading down the wrong path, your spouse is leaving you, your sibling is deeply troubled, your parent is not getting any better, your body is not working right. Never let anyone tell you that being a Christian means your life will be pain-free and easy. The first Christians faced all the same situations I just described plus they were persecuted for their faith as are many of our brothers and sisters around the world today. What did James say? It will get better? No. He did not give them false hope and neither will I. What he offered is the same promise I give to you: The Lord is with you. He is full of compassion and mercy. He not only knows your pain, He shares your pain and He will help you bear your pain – if you let Him.

Here are some next steps you can take to grow the fruit of patience.

1. I will be patient this week with someone I find frustrating.
2. I will pray and ask God to help me bear a burden.
3. I will accept help from others, especially my brothers & sisters in Christ.

When I think of patience in the face of suffering I see the face of Kirsten Hyland, the wife of John and the mother of two small girls Katelyn and Emily. With her winning smile and positive attitude it was always a joy to see her at Vacation Bible School and Adventure Club. She cheered everyone up and cheered everyone on. She used to stand at the bottom of the hill in Vermont and cheer on her girls as they skied down the slopes. “Great job Katelyn! Great job Emily! Let’s go get some hot chocolate!” When Katelyn came out of the orthodontist for the first time looking, she said, “like a beaver” Kirsten said, “Oh honey that looks painful. Let’s go get some hot chocolate.” Hot chocolate, it appears, was the answer for everything.

On the night of the science fair in February 2008, Kirsten received devastating news: she had breast cancer. Over the next 21 months, she allowed us to walk with her, pray with her, journey with her. Many of us witnessed how she patiently bore it. She even allowed me to interview her during a time of remission. Through a series of videos she

candidly shares how she faced the darkness, how she found the patience to endure. Drawing on her experience she encourages us to trust God, pray through the pain, accept help, and pay it forward. I can't think of a better way to grow the fruit of patience. On October 20, 2009, Kirsten's struggles and suffering ended. During one of the last conversations I had with Kirsten in hospice I asked if she was afraid to go to God's House. She whispered, "I'm actually looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to it."

That's patience.

May it be so for you.