

**Meditation #3 – Galatians 5:22-23, “Patience with People”**

1. When it comes to patience, this is not only an attitude we want to have before God in how we wait upon him, but this is an attitude we are to have toward others, especially in their short comings. One commentator by the name of John Calvin puts it this way, “*patience is to take everything in good part and not to be so easily offended.*” You would think he lived in the year 2020?!
  - a. This word patience in the bible can be translated, “*longsuffering.*” It can refer to someone who has a *slow fuse*. If you have ever used **fireworks** some of the big ones have a long fuse, so you can light it and run away while the fuse burns slowly & then kaboom! To have patience is to have a long fuse. To *not* be prone to dish out revenge or payback even when you are wronged or suffer injustice.
  - b. We don’t often see this in our world today. Especially on *political* issues or *Covid-19* restrictions, our lack of civility in the public square or even around the dinner table often stems from our loss of patience with one another, and our frustration that people don’t see the world like we do! We all struggle with short fuses at times. I know I do!
  - c. EX: I remember coming to learn Reformed theology for the first time in university & being so excited about the doctrines of grace. Instead of sharing the treasure, I sought to cram the good news down people’s throats. This is called **cage-stage** of theology. This cage stage often marks zealous new converts who come to a new understand of many things. Why don’t people get it – “I’ve arrived, why haven’t you.”
    - i. Reality is, *none of us have arrived*. Our hard-earned convictions could be wrong at certain points. Even on those issues that are important, whether it be *theology, justice* issue, or whatever, we need to be always renewed by the word of God, & patient w/ other people who are in process just like us! We grow in patience not only when we humbly consider our own failures, but also when we consider the incredible patience of God in scripture!
2. Consider for a moment WHO God is! In **Ex.33** Moses asked to see the glory of God. The glory of God concerns *who he is* in his character. What would you expect the glory of God to look like revealed to Moses? Perhaps we’d expect God to reveal his glory to Moses in a *thunderbolt*, or in a *terrifying voice* from the clouds. But God says to Moses in **33:19**, “*I will make all my goodness pass before you.*” God’s glory is seen in his goodness. And God tells Moses to hide himself in the cleft of the rock so that he can make his glory pass by and he reveals his glory in these words in **Ex. 34:6-7**:
  - a. “*The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness....*”
  - b. The first description God says of himself is this – merciful and gracious. And we read of how God’s heart is **bent** not on retribution or bringing down the hammer, but it is bent on mercy & grace. He is **slow to anger**. Literally “long of nostrils.” Perhaps

you've seen a pic of an angry bull with a red-hot nose! Well, God says, *I'm long in nostrils, it takes me a while to get angry*. In other words, God has a **long fuse**. The bible says God is provoked to anger/wrath, but he is not provoked to love. His mercy is pent up, ready to gush forth & burst at the slightest prick. So, what is patience? It's refusing to be irritated by the wrongs done to us. Who shows more patience than God himself? God's patience is GOOD NEWS for sinners!

3. The God who showed his glory to Moses from a distance, **came near** in Jesus Christ. **Jn.1:14**, "*the Word became flesh & dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace & truth.*" Consider the patience of Jesus in his ministry. Christ disciples were slow to understand the things of God. They were slow to obey Christ. They even abandoned the Lord at the hour of his greatest need. APP: This is all of us! We've all turned our back on Jesus in various ways, maybe that's you today?
  - a. IF Jesus were like us, he'd just **cancel** his people. They struggled to understand the basics of the cross and salvation, didn't follow God rightly, just get rid of them!
    - i. It's so easy for us to lose patience with those who, "don't get it", right? We can have a *short fuse* w/ people who aren't growing in the Lord like we want them to (whether that be our children, people we are mentoring, or a friend). We can be tempted to just give up or cut ties.
    - ii. Thanks be to God Jesus is not like us!!! He does not cancel his people, or condemn us in our sin, but he comforts us and leads us by his Spirit. God takes her sin seriously, calls to repent, but he came from heaven to so that his mercy and grace might be poured out in this world on the unworthy.
  - b. Jesus says in **Mtt.11**, "*come me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" And again, Jesus says, "*my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*" The word for **easy** is the same word translated by Paul here as **kind**? The yoke that Jesus gives actually benefits his people and gives them life! In the words of Dane Ortlund, his yoke is like helium for a balloon, it lifts us up!!!
    - i. Paul says in **Rom.2:4** that we are not to show *contempt* for God's kindness, b/c it means meant to lead us to *repentance*. The world continues right now only b/c of the patience of God! **2 Pet 3:9**, *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*"
  - c. But God's patience toward sinners will not last forever! He was patient in the days of Noah for 120 years but then the judgment waters came! IF we keep **rejecting** the goodness and kindness of God, we can only expect God's wrath. Although God's heart is bent on mercy, the Lord says *he will by no means clear the guilty!*
4. For those who hav experienced God's patience, kindness and goodness, now God calls us to reflect his heart to your brothers and sisters those around us, even our enemies.

- a. The Apostle Paul says it better in **Eph. 4:31-32**, *“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”*

### **Conclusion**

May the Lord help us to bear the fruit of patience in our lives in this world we live in. May we remember God’s incredible patience with us, and stay humble as we show that same patience to others this week.