

FOTS - Wk 5

Patience > Hurry

9/12/21

Exodus 33:17-23 and 34:5-6

Introduction

Tim. Pastor. **Exodus 34. Pray.**

RESET on BECOME LIKE JESUS → Today marks the halfway point of our series “A Fruit of the Spirit in a Time of the Flesh” so I just want to real quick reset us on where we’re at. We have a framework discipleship here at Citizens based around three movements → That we **Be with Jesus, Become Like Jesus, and then Do What Jesus Did**. And this series is focusing on that second aspect by looking at how we become like Jesus. This is a part of our discipleship to Christ - part of what it means to be a Christian is that more and more over time your life - rhythms, habits, routines, disposition, decisions - should look like Christ.

Which we said, week 1, means we need to know what Jesus is like. And I think the best, not exhaustive, but best list for the markers of Christ is in Galatians 5 - the Fruit of the Spirit - Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. So we’re taking each week to look at one of the parts of the fruit and examining that fruit in the life and teachings of Jesus in parallel to the cultural moment that we live in.

- Love in a time of selfishness.
- Joy in a time of cynicism.
- Peace in a time of anxiety.

And now today I want to talk about **Patience in a Time of Hurry**.

In a Time of Hurry

Let’s start by talking about **hurry**. We live in a time of hurry.

Let’s do a participation exercise:

- At any point you felt like you didn’t have enough time to accomplish everything you wanted or was supposed to accomplish.
- When someone asked how you were doing you said “busy”.
- You drove over the speed limit, only like half stopped at a stop sign, or changed lanes angrily because of a slow driver, idk hypothetically on Monroe Rd.
- You were stuck in a conversation that you didn’t want to be in or didn’t really have time for, checking your watch or tapping your foot thinking - This needs to end.
- Right now you’re like - can we get on with this sermon so I can get to the food trucks outside? (JUST KIDDING DON’T ANSWER THAT).

We live hurried lives.

One of my favorite examples of this is in **1967 the United States Senate** put together a subcommittee based on the belief and expectation that given the rapid rise of technology and automation by 1985 the average American would work only **22 hours a week and 27 weeks a year**. And so the Senate was worried what all of that leisure and vacation and relaxation time would mean for American infrastructure - highways, beaches, national parks - Could American infrastructure handle all of the free time Americans were going to have.

The irony is that rather than make our lives more full of leisure, technology has had the opposite effect - now the average American works nearly **4 more weeks per year** than they did 50 years ago.

Advancements in technology haven't made us slow down. If anything they've only sped us up more:

- Instant coffee
- Order ahead fast food
- Programmable HVAC units
- Email and access to incredible amounts of information and people all over the world via a device in your pocket - so we're on call 24/7

Psychologists have started picking up on this pervasive problem of the American inability to slow down or shut off - our need to always be doing something, to be busy. They named it "**hurry sickness**" - Here's how they define it:

A behavioral pattern characterized by continual rushing and anxiousness.

This constant state of rushing:

- **Externally** - frantic activity, the inability to put down our labor or our work or our to-dos.
- **Internally** - the inability to slow down our souls or cut off our inner "to-do critic". That feeling you get even when you're sitting and watching a movie - I should be doing something, answering texts or email, this chore, that thing. We just can't slow down.

And this is having some pretty drastic consequences on us...

- **Mentally** - The average American has an attention span of 8 seconds, which is shorter than a goldfish.
- **Emotionally** - We talked last week about this anxiety epidemic in our culture.
- **Relationally** - We're irritable, we're hypersensitive, we lash out at others - at our spouse, at our kids, at our friends.
 - Or we just don't have time or patience to build lasting friendships. We're impatient, so we want immediate intimacy and depth right away. And we grow frustrated with relationships that haven't grown or blossomed the way we want to.
 - We don't sit in the pain or discomfort of relationships with others - we want them to move at our speed, we want to reconcile at our speed, we want them to mature at our speed.
- **Spiritually** - Our hurry can wreck us doing the spiritual practices - Bible reading, prayer, silence and solitude....We don't have the ability to sit with God. To abide with Jesus. To just be in His presence. As theologian Ronald Rolheiser says, "**We are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion.**"
 - We also can grow impatient in our place in life. We're not in the season we want to be in. We've grown tired of waiting on the Lord. We've grown tired of our lack of maturity - we're impatient in our own sanctification and spiritual growth.
 - We have no ability to sit and wait on the Lord, on His providence, on His kindness, on His hand and working and leading - we think if we want this situation to get fixed we just have to do it ourselves because God isn't showing up how or when we want Him to.

Hurry is not just this external system or speed thrown on us in American culture. It's not just the rat race we all buy into. Hurry is of the flesh.

And hurry is of the flesh because **hurry is incompatible with love for God and love for neighbor.**

1 Corinthians 13, the famous passage on love from the Bible, a wedding favorite - tells us the very first characteristic of love is that **love is patient.**

And what hurry does is that hurry puts us in a posture towards the world, ourselves, circumstances, and God that expects immediacy and responds impulsively. It puts us in an ungodly posture of **fleshly reactivity.**

Patience

And yet the Fruit of the Spirit, the Way of Jesus...is **patience**. We are called to patience in a time of hurry. Let's talk about the Biblical idea of patience.

Let me start by defining it. This definition comes from my friend Brandon Shields at Soma Church in Indianapolis. He says this: **"Christian patience is a non-anxious inner presence that waits with God as He works out His redemptive purposes in His redemptive time."**

There are two main Greek words the Bible uses for patience and together they give us a really good picture of what this fruit of patience looks like.

1. Hupomoné (ὑπομονή) - Patience in our circumstances.

This word has to deal with our patience in our circumstances. Perseverance, endurance, often translated as steadfastness - an ability to wait under pressure. To not have to alleviate or fight against the discomfort or the frustration right away. To be able to sit in it with the Lord and trust His timing.

Instead of our culture of instant gratification and immediate reprieve from pain - we are called to patient endurance in our circumstances.

2. Makrothumia (μακροθυμία) - Patience towards others.

This word has to deal with our patience not towards our circumstances but towards others. It literally means being long (makro) passionate (thumia). It is the idea of being long tempered. Not that you're angry for a long time but that it takes a long time for you to become angry. Long-fused instead of short fused. Someone who is **slow to anger**.

Being willing to defer or to delay our anger. Not reacting or lashing out, but bearing with others. We delay our emotional response such that we create space for the person to grow.

Instead of our culture of hurry and quick fixes which demand either perfection or immediate repentance and change - we are called to patience.

We are called to wait on the Lord as He works out His redemptive purposes in His redemptive time - whether that be in our circumstances and situations, or in our relationships. We are called to wait. To be patient. To slow down and trust what God is doing, how He's doing it and when He is doing it.

The Patience of Christ

Which leads to the question we've been asking all series - how does this fruit show up in the life of Jesus?

How does patience show up in the life of Christ? Honestly - all over the place. Jesus was incredibly patient. There are so many stories I could take you to in the His life:

- His patience with Peter, restoring Him to ministry after Peter denies Him 3 times.
- His patience with those in need - He is constantly allowing people to interrupt Him with their concerns, their needs, their pains.

- His patience with God's plans and purposes. It's always been incredible to me that Jesus, God in the Flesh, spent 30 of his 33 years of his life in relative obscurity as a carpenter. You want to talk about patience with your circumstances? Try being the Son of God and yet waiting for 30 years before you do any public ministry.

But, I just kept coming back to a passage not about Jesus, God the Son, but about God the Father. And I think I'm stuck here because at least for me growing up in Church I had this faulty view of God where there was a separation where the God of the Old Testament is this mean, angry, vengeful and spiteful God, but then there's like happy, joyful, patient, loving, compassionate God of the New Testament named Jesus.

And what we don't realize is that (1) God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, (2) God the Father and God the Son are both God. We affirm - One God, Three Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (3) Jesus, God the Son is the perfect embodiment of what has always been true about God.

So when we read stories of the patience of Jesus - towards crowds, towards nonbelievers, towards religious leaders, towards His disciples - we are seeing an embodiment of what has always been true about God: **God has always been patient.**

Let me show you this clearly. **Exodus 34:6.** One verse today.

On Mount Sinai - Moses and God. Moses asks in Exodus 33:17 - "Lord, show me Your glory." Show me who You are. Reveal Yourself to me. And this is how God describes Himself:

Exodus 34:6

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

This is a weighty verse. It is actually the most repeated verse in the whole Bible - over 10 times this verse comes back up in other places. Biblical scholars consider this, besides the incarnation of Jesus - God taking on flesh - as the highest point of divine revelation in the entire Bible. This is the character and nature of God straight from God Himself → **God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

And this is crucial to us understanding the fruit of patience. So let's take a minute to break down these two phrases:

1) God is slow to anger.

Our default view of God in the Old Testament is that He's just full of smite. He's waiting up in heaven with a lightning bolt for somebody to mess up so he can just go "AHA! I KNEW IT. SMITE!" But that's not who God is. God is slow to anger.

That's abundantly clear given the context of this passage. The quick summary version of Exodus 1-33 is:

- **God's people**, the Israelites are living as slaves in the land of Egypt. It's a brutal, harsh reality. God wants to raise up Moses to lead His people out of the land and into freedom. Moses starts whining and complaining - "I'm not good at public speaking. Send someone else."
- **God stays patient.** Gives him a helper in Aaron. They go, God does His thing with some plagues. The Israelites are delivered and brought out of Egypt and into freedom. YAY! Should be celebrating right? Sort of. Then the Israelites start complaining - they're hungry. They're starving without food and water in the desert. Start wondering if it's better to go back to Egypt.
- **God stays patient.** He sends them bread from heaven and water from a rock. AWESOME! Should be celebrating right? Sort of. The bread is bland and boring, start complaining again.

- **God stays patient.** He calls Moses up to meet with Him. They meet together for a long time - God is outlining an entire societal system where God's people will flourish in the presence of God. BUT...it's taking too long. So the people gather together all their gold, burn it down and make it into a statue of a cow and start worshipping it. Moses comes down the mountain, is furious.
- **God stays patient.** Calls Moses back up in Exodus 33. And here's where He declares about Himself - I am slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

God is patient.

Which, if I'm being honest, is the exact opposite of how I am for much sillier reasons. I walk around in my flesh ready to pounce over the silliest things.

Milkshakes → So this week, on Monday, I was at the park with Harper and Lindsay texted and asked if I would be willing to grab her a burger and a milkshake for dinner, she's had a lot of nausea and didn't feel like she could stomach our dinner plan. (pro tip: if your pregnant wife asks for a burger and a milkshake, you say yes). So I put Harper in the car, drove to McDonalds - they got burgers, but their milkshake machine "isn't working." (always a lie). No big deal. Grab the burger, and I know that right down the road there's a place literally called "Steak & Shake." It's in the name. Pull up. Order the milkshake. "Sorry sir, we aren't doing milkshakes today." What do you mean TODAY?? Are you taking a Labor day milkshake break?? Like what is this??

Now I'm angry. And justifiably so. Right? I head towards home dejected and angry. And as I'm driving I look up and see a Wendy's. No milkshakes, but they do have frosties. Pull up. This poor lady. She's got to be the most happy person on a fast food intercom I have ever heard. "WELCOMEEE TOOOO WENDY'SS". I mean it's ridiculous. And I kid you not - this is what I said → "Are y'all doing frosties or what?" The answer was yes. Got the frosty! Kaboom.

It is baffling, humbling, and embarrassing how quickly I can lose my temper. And I think it's me going 0 to 60, when really because of my flesh and my hurry it's really that I'm at 55, so all it takes is a little bit of gasoline to hit the mark.

And we can wrongly think that God is like Tim on a milkshake hunt. Like He's just waiting for us to screw something up so He can get angry and lash out and rain down His vengeance. That He is in a hurry.

But listen to me Church - God is slow to anger. The holy God that we worship has patience for sin and sinners even when we rebel, when we revile, when we mock, when we scorn, when we reject. He is patient.

But the other thing that's striking as you read the Exodus narrative is not only God's patience with His people, but also His patience towards their circumstances.

- The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt for over 200 years.
- Then we get introduced to Moses, the one who is supposed to lead them out, He lives in Pharaoh's house for 40 years, accidentally kills a guy, and goes into hiding in a place called Midian for another 40 years, so he doesn't even begin to talk to Pharaoh until he's 80.
- Then, when God does send Moses to talk to Pharaoh about letting the Israelites go, God waits and sends 10 different plagues before finally Pharaoh changes His heart.

So God is patient with His people, but He's also patient in His working in their circumstances. God always works on His timetable. He is not rushed, He is not in a hurry. He works in His timing and in His ways.

But it gets even better....

2) Abounding in steadfast love

So not only is God delayed in His anger, but He is the exact opposite in His love. Here's how Pastor Dane Ortlund puts it. This is from *Gentle and Lowly*, the book we are working through as a church this fall in our book studies:

“Unlike us, who are often emotional dams ready to break, God can put up with a lot. This is why the Old Testament speaks of God being ‘provoked to anger’ by His people dozens of times. But not once are we told that God is ‘provoked to love’ or ‘provoked to mercy.’ His anger requires provocation; His mercy is pent up, ready to gush forth. We tend to think: divine anger is bent up, spring-loaded; divine mercy is slow to build. It’s just the opposite. Divine mercy is ready to burst forth at the slightest prick.”

Does God have righteous judgment for sin and sinners? Yes. If you read the book of Exodus you'll see this. There are several times in the book - both by the Israelites and the Egyptians where God is provoked to anger. But that's not what God is most fundamentally about. It is not what is central to Him. What is central to Him is His being slow to anger and abounding steadfast love.

Here's how Lamentations 3:31-33 says it:

For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though He cause grief, He will have compassion according to the abundance of His steadfast love; for He does not afflict from His heart or grieve the children of men.

This is God's deepest heart. He longs to be in a relationship with us, longs to walk with us, longs for us to be in His presence. Has an overflow of love He wants to lavish on us. In his patience, He is not just neutral → He is ready to bless, ready to care, ready to love.

Space and Time

God, in His kindness, is slow to anger *and* abounding in steadfast love. Let me sum all of this up for us...

God is patient. That's the way of our Lord. That's the invitation for us. And yet God is not just delaying - **His delaying has a purpose.** His delay is moving towards a desired end. His goal is not simply passivity or sitting on his hands - His patience for circumstances and people is meant to lead to redemption.

Here's how Karl Barth talks about the patience of God. He says - **“The patience of God is a purposeful concession of space and time.”**

God works in what theologians call *redemptive time*.

We are people of reactivity, impulsivity and immediacy. We want it all and we want it now. But God is patient. And His patience **creates time and space for growth, maturity, change, and redemption.** This is how God has always been and always worked towards sin and sinners. He gives space. He is patient such that it would lead to our repentance, our growth, our restoration.

But His patience is not just delay. It's not just waiting around. In our hurry we get so quickly disillusioned, bitter, and frustrated. Our relationships aren't going how we want, those people aren't doing what we want, my circumstances and situation in life is not what I want. We are marked in our flesh by hurry and impatience.

The Gospel

God creates space and time for redemption. That is God's patience. That is His heart. And that is crucial to the gospel, the good news we believe.

Adam and Eve. The first man and the first woman were given one “Don’t do” command by God - Don’t eat from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. If they eat, God promised (Gen 2:17) they would surely die. They eat. But here’s a crazy part of the story - God could have struck them down dead right then and there. But He doesn’t. There is punishment for them - they are kicked out of the garden, other aspects of pain and sorrow, and one day they would die... but God in His patience delays. They don’t die right away. God gives a purposeful concession of space and time, such that they would have time to have some kids, who would have some kids, and so on and so forth until one day, 2000 years ago a baby was born through that line.

One who would live a perfect life, embodying the patience of God, who would entrust Himself to His heavenly Father - perfectly patient for the sinners who betray Him, mock Him, abuse Him, and kill Him. Perfectly patient with the plan of God for the cross and the grave.

And on that cross we are given the full picture of God’s heart for us, as Jesus, the Son of God hangs on a tree, taking the full wrath of God you and I deserve as God’s enemies - we see the most beautiful, compelling, overwhelming picture of what has always been true → **“God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”**

The cross confirms what has always been true → God’s patience for sin and sinners.

And that patience continues today...

In the book of 2 Peter, Peter is writing to a group of Christians under persecution and suffering for the gospel. And there are some within the church that are starting to give up hope. Starting to scoff and laugh at the faith of others basically saying - “at this point, Jesus is never going to return. Things are just going on as they always do. It’s just going to keep getting worse, what’s the point?” And this is what Peter says:

2 Peter 3:8-9 - 8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 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.

The Lord has always been patient with sin and sinners. Always slow to anger, always abounding in steadfast love, always ready for new mercy and forgiveness and grace.

And if you’re here today, and you’ve never put your faith in Jesus:

You’ve never given up trying to fix yourself, save yourself, run your own life and be your own god and yet you still have breath in your lungs - that is God’s patience and kindness desiring that you would repent (turn from your sin) and come to Him. *GOSPEL CALL*

And if you are a Christian in the room:

I want to remind you and encourage you of God’s never ending patience for you in Christ Jesus. Despite your brokenness, despite your flaws, despite your doubts, despite your rebellion, despite your suffering - if you are a believer you are hidden in Christ and God’s mercies are never every morning.

J.C. Ryle says it like this, let this encourage you - **“Our Lord has many weak children in His family, many dull pupils in His school, many raw soldiers in His army, many lame sheep in His flock. Yet He bears with them all, and casts none away.”**

Invitation

So the invitation for us tonight is to let the patience God has for us lead us to become more like Jesus in our patience for others. That we would create time and space, that we would entrust ourselves to the timing of God - in our circumstances and in our relationships.

That we would embody **a non-anxious inner presence that waits with God as he works out His redemptive purposes in His redemptive time.**

So I want to ask you as we close - where is the Lord inviting you to the fruit of patience today?

- Is there a relationship where you were too quick to write it off or bail out and yet God is inviting you to patience - creating space and time for restoration.
- Is there someone who you have been praying and hoping for years to become a Christian and God is inviting you to wait on Him in patience.
- Is there a particular suffering you're trying to breeze past or move on from or fix yourself under your own power and God is inviting you to patience and to waiting on Him and trusting in Him.
- Maybe it's just in the day to day ups and downs of life that you're trying to grab by the horns and do on your own in a hurried lack of trust and patience in God.

Let's follow the way of Jesus in the fruit of patience.

Cultivating Patience

There's two practices this week as we seek to cultivate the fruit of patience in our lives:

1. **Sabbath**
2. **Waiting**

Pray. Communion.