

Fruit Of The Spirit #1

Powerful Patience

Galatians 5:22-23, 25-26

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-controlled. Against such things there is no law. Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

How many of you like to put together jigsaw puzzles? I read a little article as I was preparing for this message. It was called “Everything I needed to know about life, I learned from jigsaw puzzles.” The article said to: 1. Establish the border first. Boundaries give a sense of security and order. 2. When things aren’t going so well take a break. Everything will look different when you return. 3. Working together with friends and family makes any task quicker and more fun. 4. The creator of the puzzle gave you the picture as a guide book. 5. Don’t force a fit. If something is meant to be, it will come together naturally. 6. Perseverance pays off. Every puzzle goes together bit by bit, piece by piece. 7. Anything worth doing takes time and effort. A great puzzle can’t be rushed.

I think the lesson we can pull from this is, patience is the key. If you are NOT patient you may end up trying to force pieces in where they don’t belong. So patience is key.

In Galatians God tells us that one of the most noticeable marks of a true Authentic Spirit led believer is patience. A mature Christian is a patient Christian. I also believe the less patient you are, the less mature you are as a believer.

I want to get this clear, God isn’t talking about the patience it takes to stand in line at the grocery store when the lady in front of you has 1000 coupons and you are in a hurry. Or the patience it takes when someone cuts you off while you are driving.

As important as it is to have patience in times like those, God has called us to a higher patience that can only happen when we are walking in step with the Spirit.

In Galatians, God tells us we MUST be patient with each other.

The church in Galatia had some serious problems. They couldn't get along with each other. Look at Galatians 5:15 "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

This church had a problem. Problems like sexual immorality, drunkenness, infighting and hatred. Paul went on to describe how a church body should be towards each other, where they work together at creating an atmosphere of joy, peace and patience.

This morning I want to focus on the need to be patient with each other.

The Greek word for patience is "Makrothumi" it means slow to anger. Or as the KJV puts it "LONGGGGGGG suffering."

Illustration: I recently read a story about a kindergarten teacher who was helping one of her students put on their boots.

So why was that teachers will to show patience? Because this little boy was only a kindergartner. HE wasn't trying to be rebellious or mean spirited. He was just immature.

God is patient with you and me. If he wasn't patient with us we wouldn't have a prayer. When people in the church irritate us, cause us to be annoyed, or rub us the wrong way we need to imitate God by, "Bearing with each other and forgiving whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

So how do we do this? Jesus said in Matthew 7:5 "First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

In other words we first need to examine our own hearts to make sure the reason we're irritated with our brothers and sisters in Christ isn't because of self-righteousness, or being judgmental. If we don't do that first, we will end up beating each other to death with the planks in our own eye while trying to remove the specks out of theirs.

Jesus does expect us to remove the plank first. I'm not addressing this issue because I think we have a problem here. In fact, I think we are a healthy congregation that loves each other. This is a place where people feel free to be themselves and come as you are. But even the best of churches need to be reminded to be loving and patient with one another. We tend to forget in the heat of our offence and anger.

God's goal is to take people from many different backgrounds and walks of life, people who struggled with many different sins, then save them and join them together like they were puzzle pieces. His goal is to take these people of various shapes and sizes and colors and fit them together to form a beautiful picture of unity that can impress even the most jaded skeptic or critic.

Now the problem is patience doesn't come naturally to most of us!! Remember, Galatians 5: says "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience. If we live in the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." So if I am going to have the patience God wants me to have then I need to allow Him to train me.

So how does He train us to be patient? First of all, He does it by reminding me that He was patient with me.

Colossians 3:12-14 "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Remember, God's goal is to take people who come in many shapes and sizes and fit us all together into one body for His glory.

Closing Illustration: Story of a dad who came in late from work and all he wanted to do was sit down and relax. "When you put the man together, the world comes together."

That's our goal in the church, to put people together in the church in such a way that we build the kind of congregation God wants us to be. A church that is a praise and a proclamation of the power of God.