

“Peace and Patience”

Fruit of the Spirit, part #2

Philippians 4:4-13

I am glad you are here this morning. We have gathered to worship God, to encourage each other, and to respond to God’s word together. You are in the right place. Would you pray with me?

God Almighty, you know every person’s heart. You know our thoughts, our hopes and our weaknesses. Draw us closer to you this morning. Give us the grace to fall more deeply in love with your Son, Jesus Christ. By your Holy Spirit, show us the way you want us to live. Help us, as your church, to give you all the honor, all the praise, and all the glory. This we ask in the strong name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

(Grab the guitar.) As part of our series on the Fruit of the Spirit, we have been learning a camp song. I want to give you a second chance at it this morning, to help you memorize Galatians 5:22-23. (sing two verses) **[SLIDES]**

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are the fruit God wants in our lives, and hopefully all of us strive for them. Admittedly, we are not perfect, so we have to intentionally work on the fruits that do not come easily for us. But our goal, like we said last week, is to develop these characteristics in ourselves and in our church. This week we are focusing on peace and patience.

Patience is not easy for most of us. Have you heard about the guy who went to see his doctor because he thought he was shrinking? He stormed into the clinic and demanded to see the doctor at once. He yelled at the nurse, “It’s an emergency! I’m shrinking! If I don’t see the doctor this instant, I might shrink

away into nothing!” The nurse just looked at him sternly and said, “Go take a seat and be a little patient.”

[SLIDE] We live in an impatient world. Here are some stats I found online: (logisticsmgpsupv.wordpress.com/2017/04/04/how-much-time-of-an-average-life-is-spent-waiting)

According to a Timex survey, **Americans** wait:

- **32 minutes** whenever they visit a doctor
- **28 minutes** in security lines whenever they travel
- **21 minutes** for a significant other to get ready to go out
- **13 hours** annually waiting on hold for a customer service representative
- **38 hours** each year waiting in traffic

Human beings spend approximately **3 days** a year of waiting in line, which amounts to **6 months** of their lives. And the average person spends about **43 days** on hold with customer service in one lifetime.

There are worse ways to wait, however. You might wait for test results. You might wait by the phone, hoping to hear if your loved ones survived a disaster. Impatience and anxiety go hand-in-hand.

Our country is in a heightened state of anxiety due to recent church shootings. Last Sunday, there were two shootings on the same day, in Fresno, California and Sutherland Springs, Texas. More than two dozen people lost their lives. Imagine the impatience and anxiety as families waited to hear if their loved ones were safe. Sutherland Springs is about the same size as Bellaire. Now many of us are anxious for our own safety. We are impatient for someone, somewhere, to do something about these massacres.

It is easy for us to become overwhelmed. We could focus our thoughts on all these terrible events. We could start to worry, maybe even wonder if we should even attend church. Maybe it's safer at home. Peace and patience? How can we find those things when we are confronted with such tragedies? That is the question we are trying to answer.

Fortunately, the Bible has a lot to say about peace and patience. I think these two fruits are listed next to each other in Galatians because peace is so rare, it requires patience to experience it.

Remember the story of Jesus and his disciples when they got caught in the storm? It's a short story found in Mark 4. Allow me to read it to you. **[SLIDES]**

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35-41, ESV)

The contrast in this story is striking. Who was anxious? The disciples. Who had peace? Jesus. He was so calm, he fell asleep during a storm. The disciples feared for their life, and they woke up their Master. Do something!

Jesus told the wind and waves: Peace! Be still! And everything calmed down at once.

Question: How anxious would you be if you were in the presence of someone who had the power to do that? To control the destructive forces of nature? I bet that the disciples were more nervous after the storm than before!

But they learned something valuable, which they passed on to us. When you need peace, you have to look to the Lord of Creation, the Prince of Peace himself. Jesus Christ.

Paul knew this. That is why he told us exactly how to get peace in Philippians 4. If there ever was a man who needed to find peace, it was Paul. He was beaten and persecuted for his faith in Jesus. He literally wrote Philippians from a prison – he was in chains, handcuffed as a criminal. Talk about a place where you’d need patience! In prison, no one feeds you or clothes you. In a first century Roman prison, you were completely dependent on family members and friends to provide for you.

[SLIDE] But Paul never despaired. From prison, he wrote these words: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

Paul gives us the number one cure to worry, stress, anxiety and fear. PRAY. Two thousand years later, author Dale Carnegie, in his book How To Stop Worrying And Start Living, said the same thing and made a ton of money off of it. The number one way to not worry is to PRAY. Carnegie’s book was not even a Christian book! Maybe, just maybe, this truth is universal.

Before any motivational speaker or self-help author, Paul knew that the peace and patience were found in the power of Jesus Christ. **[SLIDE]** That is why

Paul could say in Philippians 4:12, “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.” What was his secret? Paul could do all things through Jesus Christ who gave him strength. (Phil 4:13)

Prayer is the total opposite of worry. When you worry, you try to control that which you cannot control, and it ends up controlling you. But when you pray, you surrender control to Jesus, and he replaces your anxiety with peace instead. And guess what? If peace doesn't come instantly, be patient.

You will be in good company as you patiently trust Christ. Jesus' disciples did a lot of waiting: they walked with Jesus for three years before Jesus revealed his purpose by dying on a cross. Then they had to wait two very long days for his resurrection. Then they had to wait for forty days in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come. What does that tell you? Waiting is a critical part of trusting and receiving God's peace.

The world does not know peace. There are more wars being fought now than at any other time in history. More killing. There is more anxiety and fear than ever in our country. My question is, if we believe Paul has the “secret” to peace and patience, what kind of church are we going to be? Will we intentionally try to make the church a place of peace? Will we be patient with each other? Or will this just be another sound bite, a good piece of advice that we don't really apply when turmoil arises in our lives?

You can apply Paul's secret. You can be content in all circumstances. I know it, because God tells us in his word. Together, we can grow the fruit of peace and patience in our lives. This must be our rallying cry. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Yes!

Paul made his decision. He found peace in prison. He patiently trusted in Christ alone for salvation. Paul received the peace that passes all understanding. What about you? Do you know the good news?

God made you. God loves you. But just like me, your sin, your brokenness, your worries and anxieties have broken God's heart. God cannot ignore our sin, God cannot pretend our sin didn't happen or doesn't matter. Instead, God acted in love, sending his own son, Jesus, to suffer and die on our behalf. Then Jesus, because he is the perfect, righteous Savior, destroyed death by rising to life again. Now Jesus leaves us with a simple choice: try to find peace on your own and fail, or repent and trust Jesus alone to save you. If you do, you can begin cultivating the character that God wants for you. It is your choice to receive eternal life, to worship and adore God, to grow the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

Peace, patience, love, and all the rest can only be found in one person: Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. So let us ask Christ to give us the peace that goes beyond anything we will ever experience in this world. Say this verse with me one last time. **[SLIDE]**

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

Memory verse

Galatians 5:22-23

"...The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Reflection questions

1. What gives you anxiety and fear?
2. What makes you impatient?
3. How have you responded to the recent tragedies in America? Are you feeling less safe than before?
4. Why was Paul content in prison? How did he find peace?
5. What do you have to do to get the same peace and patience in your life?
What does our church have to do?