

## "THE ART OF PATIENCE"

INTRODUCTION Here at the church we've been having a great deal of trouble with our telephone service. All sorts of things keep happening. Each day I have to counsel myself to hold my patience. Each month when I'm called on to OK the payment of the telephone bill I feel like writing a letter.

I heard a story recently about a little boy who stood watching a telephone repairman on a telephone pole in front of his home. The repair man was connecting a test set and then trying his connection with the test board back at the exchange office. After listening to the man for several minutes, the little boy suddenly turned and ran into his house calling for his mother. "Mother, mother.....come quickly. There's a man on the telephone pole talking to someone up in heaven". The mother said quietly, "And how do you know he's talking to someone in heaven". "Well I just heard him say, 'Hello, hello'.....'Good Lord. What's matter up there? Can't anyone hear me!"

We smile at the story and can sympathize with his feelings. The story reminds us that there are many impatient people constantly barking at heaven to hurry up and do something about everything. Many of us have gib plans and we want to get on with them. We don't like to wait. In fact, we insist on running even if we run in circles. This is not always good. Sometimes God has things for us that we get in no other way than by waiting for them. Difficult to sit still.

I've called this sermon "The Art of Patience" - and it's one of the important disciplines of life. As Christians we would do well to explore its possibilities and discover its secrets.

TURNING TO THE BIBLE I try to remind myself from time to time that one must deal with the problems of patience in a religious spirit. Turning to the Bible, we find good advice on this subject. It was Isaiah who said:

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.  
They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run  
and not be weary and they shall walk and not faint".

And it was Jesus who said:

"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.  
In your patience, possess ye your souls".

The Apostle Paul adds his thought on the matter in those words read earlier in the service: (Paul apparently thought highly of patience by including it here)

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,  
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control".

Now I think it's important that we do not confuse patience with laziness or moral indifference. To be sure, there are times when one should exhibit a righteous impatience. Patience does not mean giving in or giving up. But rather it is an attitude toward people and things, an attitude toward life in general that can be creative and enriching. Suppose we consider several aspects of the art of patience.

ENDURE MORE THAN WE THINK For one thing, we can always endure more than we think we can.

The distinguished scientist - engineer, Charles Kettering, once told of an experiment that took place in one of the laboratories under his direction. For some time, Dr. Kettering had been looking for stronger steels and had been testing many samples. One day he gave a sample to one of the assistants asking that he drill it in order to get some shavings for metallurgical tests. The Assistant returned a few hours later with the sample saying that it was too hard to drill. Kettering asked him if he had used a diamond pointed drill. The diamond pointed drill had not been used, so they tried it and it worked on that hard sample of steel. They got the shavings they needed for the tests. Dr. Kettering went on to point out to the young assistant that the steel hadn't been too hard, but that the drill was too soft.

The point is that it is so often apt to be this way with us. The experiences that we complain about are not too hard, but the trouble is that we're too soft. When we come up against the hard samples of life, we're tempted to think that we can't make it. We need to be reminded that God has given us diamond pointed tools of faith that can cut their way through any situation. There is great power in patience.

Now this applies, I feel, not only to those situations in life that we might classify as desperate, but it also relates to our ambitions and our hopes for ourselves and the world. Any great task can be a discouraging task. We know that small ambitions can be easily realized. But the larger ambitions of men require a patience that calls for great endurance. We should never be tempted to forsake great ambitions by fearing that we do not have the stuff to endure. God has given us the capacity to stand more than we think we can.

Remember how Michaelangelo, the great artist, lay flat on his back on a scaffold in the Sistine Chapel for twenty months painting his great masterpiece. He only stopped to eat and to sleep, and that was only when he was so exhausted that he was apt to fall from the platform. He threw himself into bed with his clothes on, not even bothering to take off his shoes. Although he was lame and suffering from a broken nose, he completed all 343 figures on the ceiling, a task so great that its completion is still beyond relief.

Great goals demand great efforts. We need the endurance to be patient. And when life calls on us to be patient, it is not asking us to take it easy. Sternness, sacrifice, discipline, perseverance - these are required. We can always endure much more than we think we can!

HIDDEN VALUES      And then a second aspect that we would do well to consider is that we can always find hidden values in any situation.

David Dunn in a little book entitled, "Try Giving Yourself Away" points out that many of us labor under the delusion that we will be happy when... We'll be happy, for instance, when we arrive at a certain goal. We'll be happy when we get a better job, or when our schooling is complete, or when we get married, or when the baby is born, or when we recover from some illness, or when we get moved into our new home, or when some disagreeable task is completed. Then, to our great surprise, we discover that life has a way of facing us with new complications as fast as the old ones are settled. We need to learn that even these periods of waiting may be fruitful. We need to learn to find our happiness where we are, or we're likely to miss it altogether.

Some years ago a young man was very dissatisfied with his job. He was an artist, but the routine of his everyday job as a magazine illustrator just bored

TRUST AND SERVE GOD WHEREVER, WHATEVER

A final suggestion to consider in connection with the art of patience and it is this: one can always trust and serve God wherever we are and in whatever we do.

When Albert Palmer was Pastor of the central Union Church in Honolulu, the congregation erected a new building. The architect called on the pastor to select an inscription for the chancel high above the central cross. In order to fit the space, the inscription would have to be eighteen letters and spaces in length. After a great deal of research, Dr. Palmer chose the words that he felt would fit the situation. The words would be suitable for the brides as well as for the bereaved. The sentiment would speak to old and young alike, both at Easter and at Christmas. These were the words he chose: LOVE NEVER FAILETH. Eighteen letters and spaces. The words have a special meaning for all who are called on to walk the way of patience. No matter how confused or how undertain the way, the love of God, the grace of God, is ours to sustain us and to guide us. As we learn to trust him, our impatience dies away.

*MORE,*

A Vermont Editor said of Warren Austin, as he struggled with the perplexing problems of the United Nations in that decade following the 2nd World War,

"He isn't a hero. Warren Austin is just a good Vermonter doing the job that God laid out for him to do".

Austin himself - a religious man - thought of his work in much the same way. It was this that gave him patience before the baffling issues of the world. It was his faith that anchored him down, that gave him the courage to keep facing the seemingly endless struggles that he faced. Many people wrote to him expressing their concern and their prayers for him. And to such letters, Austin replied by referring to those words of Longfellow:

"Thy calmness bends serene above,  
Thy restlessness to still;  
Around me flows thy quickening life,  
To nerve my faltering will.

Embosomed deep in Thy dear love,  
Held in thy law, I stand;  
Thy hand in all things I behold,  
And all things in thy hand."

CONCLUSION To sum it all up: we can always endure more than we think we can. We can find hidden values in any waiting situation. We can always achieve so long as we keep on trying. We can trust and serve God wherever we are and in whatever we are called on to do. Of such is the art of patience. ~~We need it. May it be yours.~~

LET US PRAY Our Father and our God, give to us the measure of patience needed for living in these days. Help us to see thy hand in all things, and all things in thy hand. Amen

him to death. He began experimenting on his own in his spare time. He drew pictures on cards. One day he showed the cards to his editor. On each card there was a picture of a rabbit, and as he flipped the cards rapidly, the rabbit seemed to jump and run away. The editor made fun of his idea, but for the young man it was the beginning of a new career in the field of film cartoons. And so it was that Walt Disney used his waiting period by working on this idea at night in his garage. There are hidden values in every situation. No period of patience need be unproductive.

WE CAN ALWAYS ACHIEVE SO LONG AS  
WE KEEP ON TRYING.

Another aspect to consider that's a part of this matter finds expression in this thought or observation: we can always

achieve - achieve something - so long as we keep on trying. It's when we give up, quit trying - we stagnate and die.

In the year 109 AD a Roman legion built an aqueduct in Spain. For eighteen hundred years that same aqueduct carried water. Around the turn of the century, the Spaniards decided to relieve the aqueduct of its burden and preserve it for posterity. They laid modern pipe lines and diverted the water. Soon afterwards, the walls of the aqueduct began to crack under the hot sun, soon it fell apart. What years of service could not destroy, idleness ruined rapidly. It's a parable of life. So long as we keep our heads up and keep on going, we live and we service. When we quit and give up trying, we stagnate and die....courting trouble.

I know there are times in our lives when the tasks of everyday living tend to get the best of us. There are times when we're tempted to throw up our hands and get out from under the responsibilities we carry. Discouragement takes hold of us. But we need to remember that the battles of achievement are won by patient, plodding effort in the heat and the smoke of the day. It is the day by day, never ending labor of hand and heart that brings victory. Sir William Osler has words for us at this point:

"Throw away all ambition beyond that of doing the day's work well. The travelers on the road to success live in the present, heedless of taking thought for the morrow. Live neither in the past, nor in the future, but let each day's work absorb your entire energies and satisfy your widest ambitions".

Many years ago a man by the name of Edward Gibbon wrote in his diary,

"It was at Rome on the 15th of October, 1864, as I sat musing among the ruins of the capitol that the idea of writing the decline and the fall of the city first entered my mind".

And nearly 23 years later, he made this entry,

"It was on the night of June 27th, 1887, that I wrote the last lines of the last page".

During those 23 years, Gibbon had done a fantastic amount of research. His great work, "The Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire" fills six volumes. And all of this time, Gibbon was an invalid. The rewards of patient, plodding effort bring great satisfaction. This is the way that the work of the world gets done. We can always achieve something - so long as we keep on trying.

PASTORAL PRAYER: May 24, 1970

ETERNAL SPIRIT - who, whether we walk through green pastures, beside still waters, or through the valley of the shadow of death -  
canst be our guide and our helper -

by the sea

BEHOLD US NOW - here in this place of worship, seeking in a common prayer light upon our separate ways and strength within our individual lives. Seek us out - one by one - in those special circumstances of need that have brought us into thy presence on this day of Spring beauty and warmth. warm summer beauty

HERE - lift up the unhappy souls into joy, the discouraged souls into encouragement, the souls burdened with guilt into the light of thy love and forgiveness, the defeated souls into victory and thus enable us to:

"Fight the good fight - to keep the faith - to finish the course".

BREATHE INTO our hearts, O God, goodwill and generosity. Break down our stubborn prejudices. ~~Save us from racist attitudes. Forgive us that we are such a great part of the world's problems and such a small part of its solutions.~~ Recreate our spirits into the likeness of Him who died for all mankind.

UNTO THY CARE AND THY GUIDANCE, we commit the life of this troubled nation.

Make us worthy of the great heritage of faith and of freedom and prosperity that is ours. Help us to be more concerned about those who in this land do not share in the abundance of its rich heritage.

Be with those our elected leaders - our President, our representatives in Congress. Keep them strong and sensitive in their desire for peace and in the ways that will bring it. Help them to see the folly of war and of violence.

AND NOW SEPARATE this congregation into its individual souls. Come to each of us in our concern for those we love and hold dear - those from whom we are separated by distance, but from whom we are not separated by thought, love and concern.

Grant forgiveness to those who have transgressed thy laws. And grant comfort to those who in recent days have placed loved ones to eternal rest.

THEN LEAD US, WE PRAY THEE, FROM this time and place of worship back into the affairs of the world. May we go with a sense of thy undergirding, with a deepened commitment to the values of truth and justice, peace and goodwill for all people.

IN THE NAME AND SPIRIT OF CHRIST, WE PRAY.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP -

HYMN

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APOSTLES CREED

PRAYER & LORDS PRAYER

SOLO

RESPONSIVE READING - 570

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SCRIPTURE READING

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HYMN

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BENEDICTION