

Patience vs. Temper

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[0 : 00] A tragic and horrific thing took place early last week.

A teenage girl and her mother were driving down Interstate 45 in Texas, and they were in the middle of an argument. I can only imagine the yelling, the screaming, the spite, what mom said or what the girl was doing, how she was acting.

Some of those things I don't know. But driving down Interstate 45, the 15-year-old just opened the door in the middle of the argument and jumped out of the car.

And was hit by another car and killed. Again, it really happened. I have no idea what they were arguing about, what mom said or what the daughter had said.

I can't imagine. I can't imagine how mom feels now. And whatever was wrong, whatever the daughter was doing, however the daughter was acting or reacting, this certainly wasn't what she wanted.

[1 : 26] I can't imagine the regret, wishing that she would have just dropped it for the time, wishing she just said, I love you, or just been patient with her daughter, with whatever was going on.

That's a horrific scenario that really happened. But what I found so striking about it is that situation, that incident, although it ended in tragedy, up until that point, it's probably something that we are at least somewhat familiar with, where we're arguing, where we've lost our cool, where we've lost our temper.

And so you've probably had your run-ins and said things that you regret, where you lost your temper. This afternoon, I want to look at a proverb that talks about that.

And this is a proverb I've been thinking a lot about. It puts its finger on the heart of my impatience. A lot of my impatience.

It's Proverbs chapter 14, verse 29. I hope you'll turn there. Proverbs chapter 14, verse 29. This is the only proverb we're going to look at, and I hope and trust that we can keep it fairly brief and practical and helpful for you.

[2 : 52] Proverbs 14, 29. It says, A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly. Now, this verse is telling us what we're showing off for other people, what we're displaying, what you're flying proud for everyone to see.

This really is all about showing off, what you're displaying. The patient man is displaying, is showing, is lifting up his great understanding.

So, with the patient people, you see their wisdom and their understanding. You see it in their subdued, thoughtful spirit. So, the heat is on, the fire is high, and then you see how they act in that fire, under aggravation, under annoyance.

Now, a fool, it says, shows his annoyance at once. That's another proverb. But you can see it on their face. You can hear it in their words. Their words blurred out.

They act their annoyance. It's all in their expression. It's in their tone of voice. And so, you can see them. They show their annoyance at once. So, they complain to every waitress.

[4 : 04] Maybe you know people like that. They tell others, oh, I was so ticked off about this or that. And, I don't know about you, but when people are like that, I don't walk away with a higher opinion of someone that thinks it's great to complain.

It's about what you're showing people. A patient man has great understanding. And so, this proverb is a litmus test as to how great, how far does our understanding extend?

How wise are we? How much of the fear of the Lord is getting in and working out into your life?

Because you can see it in their patience. So, how clearly do you see life?

How clearly do you see reality? How clearly do you see this is the way God's world works? It says, patient men have great understanding.

So, what do patient people understand that fools don't? What do patient people understand that quick-tempered men don't understand?

[5 : 09] Well, that's the question. That's a good question. And that's a question we want to consider together. If you're impatient, if you're quick to anger, what are you missing? What aren't you seeing about the situation or about reality, about yourself, about God?

What are you missing? Because you're missing something. You don't get something about the way things are. So, what do patient people understand that fools don't?

And again, I want to say, I've been thinking about this a lot. And I hope that you'll think about it and, and tailor, make this to your temptations.

When you have this tendency to lose your cool, lose your temper, this proverb is saying, you're, something is not registering on your scales.

You're missing something. And maybe you need to see what that is and figure that out for yourself. But, just here's a few things that I've thought about.

[6 : 12] Patient people understand that the anger of man does not bring about the righteous life God desires, requires. patient people understand that my anger generally is counterproductive to what I am trying to achieve.

So, sinful, fleshly anger, it doesn't bring about righteousness. righteousness. And I think moms and dads, we can relate to this, but anyone who is in charge of other people, it's, it's this tendency that if, if I can, if I'm angry, they'll respond to that anger and it will, they'll change.

They'll bring about, they'll have righteousness. Well, generally speaking, anger and all sinful anger is counterproductive. It actually works against you.

Now, patient people understand that. As, as tempting as anger is, it's not the way to go. So, you get, what happens when you get, what, what do you get with, with anger?

Do you get heart change? Do you get, new love? Do you get a new desires? Do you get a change of mind? Do you get godly desires? What, what do you get back when you are angry?

[7 : 32] Well, in my experience, and I, and I imagine this is universal is generally, and this is probably what happened on interstate 45 last week. And this has happened countless times in my life.

What you get back is anger. So they get angry with you. The walls go up, guns come out, defenses are up, offenses now, hey, we, we have our cannons ready.

It, anger, sinful anger, almost always works against you. It sends you backwards. It doesn't help you to help those people.

It doesn't solve your problem. Matthew Henry on this verse says, patient people understand their own interests. Now that is interesting. Matthew Henry is, he's being rather pragmatic.

And he's saying, this is what wise people understand. They, they understand their own interests. What is good for them? What are you trying to achieve? What are you trying to accomplish? The patient man has great understanding.

[8 : 34] The fool doesn't. So what do fools do? What do, what do the quick tempered man do? They, they ratchet up the tension. Now, haven't you done this where you're not getting what you want?

And so what happens to your voice? It gets louder. It gets more intense. There's more sarcasm. There's more bitterness. You get angry.

Maybe that's one side of the thing. The other side is maybe you get really deadly silent and you give them the silent treatment. But what, what, whether it's really loud and forceful anger or whether it's cold, clinical, silent treatment, what has now happened to that situation?

It has now become a battle of the wills. It's a battle of domination. It's going to be me or you and who wins? Nobody wins.

I don't get what I want. And you certainly aren't getting what you want. So the fool gets out his or her battering ram and they storm the castle.

[9 : 39] They don't get people to surrender. Not really. Sometimes people do surrender because they're just so tired of fighting, but you don't win them to your side. So outwardly, maybe parents outwardly, maybe your teenager will do what you want, but inwardly they're far away.

I read of one counseling session. And where it's father and teenage daughter and counselor, and they're sitting there in the room and dad is screaming at his teenage daughter.

You will respect me. If it is the last thing you do, you will respect me. Well, will she?

Patient people know what's in their own best interest, how to achieve their goal. It's not the shortcut of anger. It is not the forceful.

You will respect me. If it's the last thing you do, or it's the last thing I do. Rather, it's the longer road of patience. See, even as Christians, even as believers, we can mistake meekness and patience for weakness.

[10:57] And we can think that being loud or being angry is how we can really get things to happen.

But the patient man sees how things really work, how people really work, how relationships really work, how hearts really work. And so do you. The angry, the anger man doesn't bring about godliness.

Godliness. The patient man has great understanding about that. Now, you're going to meet ways to apply this situation all over your life. You're going to meet it with young children.

You're going to meet it with teenagers. You're going to meet it with coworkers and people at church, where you're going to want and think that the response is to lose your temper, to raise the temperature, and that will help.

The wise man has great understanding. And so he's patient. He's patient. John Gill, the Baptist pastor and theologian on this verse, says that the patient man understands himself and human nature.

[12:01] So we have Matthew Henry saying, well, they understand their own best interest. John Gill says, well, here's something else that they understand. They understand themselves and they understand human nature. And I just want to key in on that.

What the patient man understands himself. See what is going on in, when you lose your temper is it's a miscalculation as to what kind of person you are.

You're not understanding yourself. Fools don't get themselves. They don't, and they don't get other people either. So you show me an angry, quick tempered man, and I'll show you a person that either has not been forgiven of his sins.

Because he's so self-righteous. He's never needed forgiveness. Or I will show you a Christian who has forgotten how patient God has been with them.

Because that's what's going on is I'm thinking of myself as righteous and altogether. I have my act together, and I always have my act together, and I always do what's right, and so you should get your act together too.

[13:10] The word here for patient is long a face. It's the difference between a face being bunched up in anger and a face relaxed.

So an intense face where you're angry or a relaxed face. The word is used four times in Proverbs. The other nine times that it's used in the Bible, it always talks about the Lord's character.

He's long a face. He has more of a relaxed disposition. He's not easily angered. And the patient man knows that about God.

This is the kind of God that he is. He's slow to anger, abounding in love. And he understands that the Lord has been patient with him. He's been patient with me, is what the patient man is saying.

No one has ever treated you. And I don't care how badly they've treated you. No one has ever treated you as unfairly, judged you as harshly, misunderstood you so completely, maligned you, doubted your sincerity, misjudged your character, mistreated you.

[14:23] Mistreated you the way that you have mistreated God, judged his character, maligned him, misunderstood him, doubted his sincerity. We're all in one way or the other, these Luke 15 sons, where he asked for the inheritance.

Well, his father's still alive. And if you don't understand what he's saying, he's, the son is saying, dad, the only thing you're good for to me is dead.

And so just give me my stuff and I'll take your stuff. And that's what we did. And we have to admit that sometimes that's what we do.

Our father loves us and he cares for us and he fills my life with good things. But instead of going to him as the giver and giving him my heart and loving him and walking closely with him, I don't see him.

I didn't see him and I was blind and I was dead to him. And for years he, he put up with me. Until I hit rock bottom.

[15 : 38] And then when there was nowhere else to turn, I turned to him and he is so kind and so patient that he'll even be my savior. When it's my savior of last resort, when I've tried everything else and then I come to him, that's, that's patience.

And that's how God has treated you. Then who am I? To be impatient.

You see, it's not just showing a character flaw. It certainly is that. It's not just showing brazen ingratitude. It's showing that. It, it, it, it's really showing ignorance and a folly, a dullness to how we have really treated the Lord and how he's treated us.

We're worse than Balaam riding his donkey. We're oblivious so much of the time. And the impatient man and the impatient Christian, especially is a Christian who is not seeing the goodness of the Lord and forgiving him.

And so Jesus himself makes that connection between a king, forgiving a servant. And then that servant going around and choking another servant. We can be that way.

[16 : 57] We could lose our patience with people. So are you struggling with impatience? Remember God's mercy to you. Remember, remember God's mercy to you.

He sent his son to die a humiliating and painful death for you.

And it wasn't while you were a nice guy trying to be good to him. It was while we were still sinners, enemies of God, that he did this for us.

So grace doesn't meet us. God doesn't meet us on the way up. Like when we're trying to ascend to him, it meets us at the bottom. Now that kind of thing is in the patient man's bones.

He gets it. That, that is not, that is not theology on the page. That is theology working itself in his heart. And now it's, it's come inside of him and it's sweetened him.

[18 : 00] Have you seen old, old saints who have years of grace worked into their lives and how sweet, and gentle and patient they are. That's what God is doing.

Well, what else do the patient men understand that fools don't? Well, they understand not only themselves and how God has treated them. They understand human nature. They understand. And they really have come to terms with and accepted the reality of how people are. Now, how we wish them to be, not how we wish our children would be, or how we wish our spouse or, uh, our friends were, uh, we understand how, what they really are.

And so, you know, the Bible does a very, fairly good job of saying, let me introduce you to the human race. And as you go through it, the Bible is very clear.

This is no hagiography where they're just exalting all these saints and there's never any problems. The man after God's own heart, David falls, sins, doubts, fears, murders, commits adultery.

[19 : 08] That's how people are. That's how godly people can be. Sometimes completely oblivious and hard hearted. And we meet Peter. Bragging one minute and falling to a servant girl the next minute.

So let me introduce you to the biblical picture of this is the human race. These are the people that you live with. This is me. This is me.

We're, we're weak. We're sinful. We're complicated. And we're different. God doesn't have one cookie cutter for every person.

He makes one each original. It's an original design. We're made different. We have different experiences. And what comes easy to you? And it's just like a cinch for you is hard for someone else.

An area where you're never tempted at. And you look at people and say, how can they do that?

Well, someone is, that's their battle. That's where it is. And the way you fall in one area, they fall in another area.

[20 : 24] You might have no problem in a certain situation or a certain temptation, but they do. You might have had, have hangups that they don't and that you do.

And so here we are, we're living in a broken and a suffering world with broken and suffering people who at their very best are, have been called and have been chosen and have been forgiven.

And yet they're still works in progress. Your brother and sister here is a work in progress. And so when you take everything into consideration of what they were, where they've been, what they've gone through, what is just true of them, the being weak and sinful, maybe if you take it all into consideration, you can say, wow, the Lord is really doing something in that person's life.

Maybe they're doing okay. Maybe they've come really a long way. Maybe I can see, wow, God is really helping them. God gets glory.

It's not like God's glory is some sort of set standard in, in our lives where, uh, God's glory is the difference between what we would be without him and what he's made us.

[21 : 40] And, you know, if you're down here and you're, you would have been something really a mess and he's just made you something different. That's glory. That's glory that God is doing and, and working in your life.

And so maybe we need to say, they don't need me losing it. They don't need me to be impatient. Um, they need me to understand that.

My child needs me to understand him or her. My teenager needs me to understand him or her. And maybe they need me to be patient. It does seem that God usually has a much longer timetable than we do.

But we're in a hurry. And the Lord just doesn't seem to be in the same kind of hurry as we are. I want you to think of the two, like, not the two, but two images the Bible uses for sanctification. These aren't the only images. These aren't the only pictures. This is the only way that he describes it. But, but these are two images for what that process looks like. Ephesians calls it growing up.

[22 : 53] Growing up. Now, people don't grow up in a day. They don't grow up in a week. They don't grow up in a year. It's years of sleeping.

It's years of eating. It's years of school and day after day, 180 days of school every year. And there you are. It's gradual.

A full grown adult with grown adult thinking takes time. Takes time. I saw just a, like some sort of scientific journal saying like people's brains, this is even, they don't start, they don't complete development until about age 30.

People take time to develop and that to grow up. And that's an image that God uses for, this is the process of sanctification.

You're, you're growing up. And so my brother and sister, if they aren't where they're going to be, well, they need time. Or that maybe they're not where I want them to be.

[23 : 59] They need time. Well, God's timetable is growing up. And so maybe you need to adjust your timetable. Uh, for them or for you. Matthew Henry applies this verse and he, he says, we need to talk.

We need to even be patient with ourselves. I found that very intriguing that Matthew Henry would say something like that. It almost sounds modern, but what he is saying is people can be impatient and say, why am I still doing this?

Why, why is my trouble? And we get angry at ourselves and we, and some of that's good, but some of it then becomes counterproductive. And we need to realize God is growing us. And there's this process.

Another image is growing fruit. The fruit of the spirit. It's organic. In both of these situations. So you plant a tree, you plant, you water it.

The sun shines on it. We looked into, okay, uh, maybe we want to plant some apple trees here in our house. Well, if you get a regular, like sort of full size apple tree that you can actually buy, it's still, you plant it and it's going to be five years.

[25 : 12] That's not from seed to fruit. That's from pretty big tree to planting it. It's five years. And sunshine and rain.

And then sunshine and rain. And then fruit starts coming up. Maybe first a little and then more and more. But do you see the timeframe that God looks at us with?

That we need to learn to look at our brothers and sisters with. We're in a bigger hurry than God is. Sometimes the saints here are works in progress.

I'm a work in progress. And so they're fruit trees. And God says, just give them time. I'll bring them. I'll bring fruit out of them.

So will you be so irritated with the slow progress of God's people when God is being patient with them? So, remember everything the Bible says about people.

[26 : 17] We're weak. We're sinful. We're complicated. We're different. If they were just like you, you wouldn't have to be impatient with them because they would just be like you. But they're different from you.

And all of that is going to come out. That's not theory. That's reality. Those are the people that you live with. Those are your children. They're their own little people. And so that's what you're seeing.

And so we need to be patient. We need to have understanding about, oh, that's my daughter's temperament. That's my son's temperament. That's my friend's temperament. That's their temptation. Okay.

I know that now. And remember God's patience with you. You know, you're walking in the land of the living. You're forgiven and a child of God.

You're washed in the blood of Jesus because God was patient with you. And he's going to take you to heaven step by step, day by day, until you arrive there.

[27 : 15] And he is being patient with you. And just remember God's timetable is usually garden slow, forest slow, raising children slow.

And that doesn't mean that it's taking too long. That's just the way God's world works. That's the way God is doing things.

If he wanted it to be different, it would be different. That's reality. And the patient man gets it. He gets it. We're going to sing hymn 142 as we close.

It's one there is above all others. Well deserves the name of friends. And I picked this hymn out because it has two lines that really speak to what we are, what this is, what I'm talking about.

In line four, this is hymn 142. We ask ourselves a question. And this is such an important question to ask when we're dealing with others if we want to learn to be patient.

[28 : 28] And it says, could we bear from one another what he daily bears from us? So that's a question. And then verse five is this prayer request.

Oh, for grace, our hearts to soften. You know, soften, relax, to be receptive, to not be so hard hearted towards people, so demanding towards people, but to be loving and receptive.

Oh, for grace, our hearts to soften. Teach us, Lord, at length to love. He's teaching us to love, but it's at length we're going to get it.

Well, pray with me. Our Lord, we know that the evil one wants to pluck the seed right off the ground. The cares of the world are going to start rushing in upon us to choke out the word as we've heard it today. I do pray that you would give us soft, receptive hearts.

[29 : 37] Help us to remember the things that we've heard and to believe them and to put them into practice. When we're feeling anxious, make us as a congregation, as individuals, to run to you in prayer with thanksgiving.

And when emotions are rising and we're losing our tempers, I pray that you would remind us of what we've heard.

That you would show us again what is real, what is good, what is best, what you've done and how you've treated us.

And may all these things come storming back into our minds just as we need them, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.