

“By Patient Endurance You Will Gain your Life”

**Luke 21:5-19** <sup>5</sup> When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, <sup>6</sup> "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down." <sup>7</sup> They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" <sup>8</sup> And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them. <sup>9</sup> "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; <sup>11</sup> there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. <sup>12</sup> "But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. <sup>13</sup> This will give you an opportunity to testify. <sup>14</sup> So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; <sup>15</sup> for I will give you words<sup>1</sup> and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. <sup>16</sup> You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup> You will be hated by all because of my name. <sup>18</sup> But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> By your endurance you will gain your souls.

### **By Patient Endurance You Will Gain your Life**

The topic of this sermon is our life in Christ and particularly how it is a matter of patient endurance in the world in which we live because this world, life as we know it, is at enmity with Christ. Because of our association with him in the Holy Spirit and by our actions in this world as his disciples we will suffer that enmity as well. Please allow me a moment to throw some Scripture around.

Paul writes in Romans, "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:4-11). Then in Chapter Eight he writes, "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (8:9-11). At the beginning of Chapter Three of Colossians, Paul writes, "So if you have

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been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory” (Col. 3:1-4).

Paul’s thinking is pretty straight forward here. Our baptism was our sharing in Christ’s death. If we are united with him in his death, then we certainly will be united to him in his resurrection. Thus, we must consider ourselves dead to the present life and alive in him for the life that is to come. So, as we are alive in Christ and Christ lives to God, so must we. We cannot deny what we are as part of the new creation that is to come. As we are united to Christ in the Holy Spirit and our lives lived to self are dead and dying, our new life is hidden with Christ in God. Since we have been given new life in Christ, pursuit of the old life is only death. So, we must live in and for the new.

In our passage from Luke today, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that because of our association with him, which according to Paul is an association that is an organic or living union with him in the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves at odds with the powers that be of this world. Therefore, it will be by patient endurance or as the NIV says standing firm that we will gain, acquire, or secure the gift of this life, the new life of the new creation in Christ Jesus. New life in Christ and new life in the new creation are a free gift from God but a gift that comes at a cost. The cost is that we must live according to the new creation now while patiently enduring the opposition that this fallen world has to Christ Jesus. If we do not stand firm in Christ, we do not find our new lives in him. There is no real change in us

Another way of saying this is that we are in this world yet not of it. We are rather of the world to come because of our union with Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit. As far as this world, this age, this old way of being human; we live now with the purpose of announcing what God has done for humanity and all of his creation in, through and as Jesus Christ and living according to the new creation that has begun with his resurrection. This living accordingly is simply put in what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “But y’all, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary of doing what is right” (2 Thes. 3:13) and by right we mean right in the eyes of God not in the eyes of people. This is not a simple task. It is not easy to do what is right in the eyes of God. Because of this world’s enmity to Christ Jesus even what seems right in this world will be at odds with the love of God. We will struggle against ourselves. We will struggle against our brothers and sisters in Christ. We will struggle against those closest to us who do not share in this faith. We will struggle against the society, culture, and community in which we live. Therefore, we will find ourselves always having to patiently endure temptation to be as the culture we live in and persecution because we live according to God’s demands on our lives. Let me say more on these things.

First, we will struggle with our very selves trying not to let sin and death continue to reign in us. Sin and death are tricky adversaries and our lives are complicated things. We do not instinctively know what the right thing to do in God’s eyes is. Because something feels or reasonably seems right according to

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our culture or gut or whatever does not mean its right in God's eyes. If we do what feels right to us we are only catering to our sinful selves. If we do what is right in the eyes of other people we are only catering to that part of us that wants to be accepted in the eyes of others. I know from my own personal experience when I have asked others for their advice in what I should do, I've tended to only agree with those who have agreed with me. Indeed, some of the most significant hurts I have suffered in life have come about because I did what felt right not what the Bible said was right. This is why it is important for us to know the Scriptures and to know them prayerfully. God does not let his children who are made alive by his Spirit go on for too long living contrary to Scripture. As the one who loves us more than any of us can think or imagine, God works in our lives disciplining us to do what is right in his eyes. I can say with the utmost sincerity when God is at work with us, disciplining us to do the right, it does not feel good. Indeed, it hurts. But, when he is done with the lesson, we are better persons more compassionate, gracious, and understanding than we ever thought we could be.

Second, in addition to the constant struggle with ourselves, we must also patiently endure in our relationships with those closest to us. This struggle is quite painful. We as humans need close friendships. We need people we can trust unquestionably and we need people who love us unconditionally. Christ created the church to be such a place where we can find people we can trust and be loved unconditionally. But, our friends in Christ are here to hold us accountable to being and doing what is right in God's eyes. So, in the church, there is nothing more painful or more embarrassing than our sisters and brothers in Christ holding us accountable to do the right. You see, the Christian faith is more than simply my private relationship to God. The Christian faith is about our relationship with one another with and in Christ. The Christian faith is not about how relevant a church is to the world around it so that it can fill the pews or about programs. It is about our relationship with one another with and in Christ. We are called to fellowship in the love of Christ, a fellowship in which we hold one another accountable to what is right in God's eyes. It can be incredibly humiliating when we speak the truth to one another in love and it is a painful struggle to accept the truth about ourselves, but when we do the grace that moves in us to heal and change us is powerful. Sometimes Christians can't handle the truth and in pride begin to retaliate. Christians who do not accept the truth about themselves can indeed become anti-Christian.

Another thing along this line we must patiently endure as Christians is people close to us who are not Christian. Who don't understand why we do not live according to the same goals and values as a culture. I know my family struggled with this when I first began to pursue the call to ministry. They didn't feel the ministry was a safe profession for the little boy they knew to be so shy. They also struggled with my accepting calls to a church in West Virginia and to a wee small church in Canada. It hurts when those closest to us don't seem to understand. But, my pains in that area are nothing compared to those in our midst who are married to spouses or have family members who are actually

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belligerent to the faith. To these I say pray and patiently endure, you are especially close to Christ and are blessed to know him in his sufferings.

I spoke last week about our struggles with the world and how our mission of exposing evil and of forgiveness runs contrary to the powers that be so I will not comment there and finish up with a word of encouragement. There was a certain state senator in West Virginia who for some reason had to divulge his financial status. People in his district that it remarkable in a bad way that he was \$245,000 in debt. I used to be a member of the Rotary Club there and one afternoon while we were doing our annual trash pickup along a highway, some of us began to discuss this senator's situation. The local pharmacist who had a bit change in the bank and probably a similar amount of debt said, “If you aren't \$245,000 in debt then you aren't even in the game.” The game is being a wealthy person. The same can be said about patient endurance and the Christian faith. If we are in Christ and are not patiently enduring the inner struggle and the inter-relational struggles that come as the cost of having been freely given new life in Christ, then we had better check and make sure we're in the game. If you are patiently enduring, know in all confidence that you are in Christ and he is in you. Therefore, seek him out in prayer and prayerful reading of Scripture and in Christian friendship and you will find that he is with you and it is joy unspeakable. Amen.