

1 Timothy 1: 16; “Christ’s Perfect Patience”, Sermon # 8 in the series – “To Honor God in the church”, Delivered on April 13th, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall in the Afternoon Worship Service.

The patience which is being referred to in our text is the patience of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shown toward the Apostle both before and after his conversion. He confesses that this is the reason why he obtained mercy. It was because the Lord Jesus intended to set forth His perfect patience which he exercised toward Paul as an example to all who would believe in Him for everlasting life. It is something for which the Apostle breaks out into a doxology of praise in verse 17, and something for which each of us as believers ought to thank Christ for on a regular basis. Christ demonstrates perfect patience toward those who are His. When an artist is sketching a person's face, he must look carefully and then he draws the lines which he believes and hopes will faithfully represent the one that he is looking at. He must patiently consider in order to faithfully represent. He must be patiently steady in what he draws, and then the likeness will be true. It is just so with Jesus Christ and even more so, because Jesus Christ as our Savior is faithfully and patiently representing us to the Father. His sketches are of our lives, as believers, and they are on-going throughout our lives, after our conversion. Christ draws the portrait of each believer's life with perfect patience and with perfect accuracy. He adds a little here, and takes away a little there until he achieves what He is looking for. And the Father's goal in receiving the sketches of our faces is to see how much they will, in the end, come to look like His own dear Son. This requires great patience. In what ways, then, is the patience shown to Paul to be understood as a pattern for all of God's Elect?

1st of all - It is a pattern in that Christ was patient with Paul when he was at his worst in sin.

This was before his conversion on the road to Damascus. I am quite sure that God was not only displeased with Paul's sin, but He was also angry with him as a sinner. Paul was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man it says in verse 13. God considered Paul as a child of wrath during this time of his disobedience. He was in the same category that all of us are in before conversion. His wrath and anger at our sin abides on us, until Christ comes to us and removes it from us. And yet all that while, that Paul was a child of wrath, God through Jesus Christ, was being patient with him. Perhaps it would be best to attempt to define what God's patience is. The Puritan John Flavel says that it is “an ability in God not only to delay the execution of wrath for a time towards some, but to delay it in order to the eternal salvation of others.” Turn to Romans 9: 22. “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” We see from this that God is willing and able to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known. Everyone here in this room today is a sinner and we are either in Christ or under His righteous wrath. His wrath abides on all outside of Christ. It is not as though He could not strike us all dead and immediately consign us to eternal punishment, were it not for Christ. His hatred of sin is of that nature, but something constrains Him. It is His remembrance of what He intends to do in Christ. It is His patience, and His patience is based upon the fact that He is intending to make known the riches of His glory to all the vessels of mercy; all these mercies which He prepared beforehand in predestinating love in relation to His Son, Jesus Christ. He therefore endures with much patience the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction for this very reason; that He has purposed mercy to a very great number; that is the number of His elect. All of this patience is based upon His power to hold His wrath in check until His purpose is accomplished with regard to His elect. You can see a good example of this if you will turn with me to Numbers 14: 17 and 18.

In this passage we find that God is very indignant and angry with the people of Israel. They had rejected Him in that they had not believed the signs which He performed among them." "When Moses intercedes with God he says, "And now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as you have spoken, saying, "The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means will clear the guilty...." What is Moses saying here? He is saying that God's patience consists in holding back his wrath, suspending the execution of his justice for a while, even for a long while, so that He might accomplish the purpose of mercy that He intends for His chosen ones. In our sincerely believing in the finished work of Jesus Christ, we know that God's eternal wrath and anger are turned away from us, permanently and forever. We find that God's patience is personalized in Jesus Christ and applied by Christ Himself to each and every believer. His purpose in regard to the Apostle Paul is probably the greatest Biblical example. Paul was at his worst before his conversion, when His name was Saul. Turn with me to Acts Chapter 9. In Acts Chapter 8, when Stephen was stoned for his faithful testimony to Christ, and against the unbelief of the nation of Israel, it says in verse 1, "Now Saul was consenting to his death." A great persecution was instigated against the church at Jerusalem, and no doubt Saul had a leading hand in it. In chapter 9, verse 1 then, we read, "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the High Priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." Saul was not intending to be converted to Jesus Christ by any means. But God had patiently awaited this hour. He deliberately chose the time of the height of Saul's rebellion against the gospel to save him. Christ had patiently waited to exercise His righteous rule over him to demonstrate His mercy. Paul was sinning greatly against God and Christ, and yet God would show him this mercy unto eternal life. Verse 3 says, "As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven." "Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" We see here that the Lord Jesus shone such bright light around Saul from heaven, that he fell to the ground. He struck him with light, and brought him down with grace. He spoke and acted with perfect patience.

The Lord Jesus could have struck Saul down in justice at any time in his life of proud, hateful, self-righteous persecution. But he did not. The Lord Jesus was patient while all of these terrible sins were being committed by Saul against the Lord's people. And even here, were He first speaks to him on the road to Damascus, He speaks to him patiently. He asks him the question, "Why are you persecuting Me?" And verse 5 says, "And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?" "Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'" "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." It is almost as if the Lord is sympathizing with Paul that it is hard. It is as though the Lord Jesus is saying, "Is it hard for you to kick against all the goads that I have sent you to prick your conscience?" This Paul is saying in our text in 1 Timothy, was the Lord Jesus showing in him first, His perfect patience. Paul would be the first, in the foremost sense, of a long procession of people who would come to believe and to praise God for His perfect patience, people who were cruel and vile sinners before they believed. What about you, my friends? Do you praise God for His perfect patience with you? Have you seen your many sins which you commit every day against the Holy God, forgiven? Then praise God for His patience with you. Do you see the sins of your heart, the sins of your thoughts and your mind as provoking and offensive to Him? You say, "Oh my sins are not so many and so great." I think that if you say this that you greatly mistake yourself. I am inclined to think that the arithmetic of August Toplady is quite correct. See if you agree with me. "Supposing a person was to break the law but once in 24 hours; to how many would his sins amount in a life of twenty, thirty, forty, sixty, seventy, or eighty years?" Answer: "If he was to fail in a moral duty but once a day his sins at ten years of age would amount to 3,650." "At twenty years, the catalog would rise to 7,300." "At thirty, to 10,950." "At forty, to 14,600." "At fifty, to 18, 250." "At eighty, to 29,200." He says, "But we must go further still." "What if a man's sins keep exact pace with every hour of his life, that is, we will suppose him to sin 24 times in a day." "His sins will then amount, in a life of ten

years, to 87,600.” “At twenty years of age they will accumulate to 175,200.” “At thirty to 262,800.” “At forty, the 350,400.” “At fifty, to 438,000.” “At sixty, to 525,600.” “At seventy, to 613, 200.” Then he asks a question. “Is there a single minute from the first of our existence to the very article of death, wherein we come up to the whole of that inward and outward holiness which God's all perfect law requires?” Answer, “Most certainly not.” “How many sins then is each of the human race guilty, reckoning only at the rate of one sin for every minute?” Answer: “At ten years old we are guilty of no fewer than 5,256,000 sins.” “At twenty, of 10,512,000.” “At thirty, of 15,568,000.” “At forty, of 21,024,000.” “At fifty, 26,280,000.” “At sixty, of 31,536,000. At seventy, of 36,792,000.” “At eighty, of 42,048,000.” He then goes on to calculate what they might be if we sinned in some way every second of the day. Sixty seconds in minute. But I will not relate any more. When shall we be able to pay off such an immense debt? The answer is never. But if we think of the patience of the God in relation to our many sins, it also is very great. And that patience is found to be demonstrated in our Lord Jesus Christ. He can afford to be patient in dealing with us as sinners because He has paid the entire punishment and debt that is owed to justice and to God Himself by His death on the cross. Oh how thankful each believer ought to be for Christ's perfect patience with us before we were converted. How often and how long did Christ bear with you in your sin and wickedness when you stood it out against him before you awoke to the awfulness of sin. What great relief it was to you when you found a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and you plunged beneath that flood and washed all your guilty stains! What perfect patience was shown until that blessed time. And you who have not awakened; how long will Christ have to bear with you until you see that the greatness of your sins could easily take you immediately down to hell and destruction, if God through Jesus Christ is not patient? This would be the saddest and most painful of dilemmas. Do not let it happen, but let the kindness and patience of God lead you to repentance and faith today.

Now 2ndly- Christ's patience is a pattern in that Christ was patient with Paul after his conversion, to teach him all the qualities of character that would enable him to serve God acceptably.

Christ is not only patient with regard to our sins before conversion but also after it. He died for both in regard to the believer. He demonstrates perfect patience in regard to the sanctification of every believer. We are to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. That conformity takes time and patience on the part of the Master teacher. What He does in your life as a Christian will be to patiently teach you and discipline you so that you will become like Christ and share in His holiness. He who has begun a good work will (patiently) perform it until that Day when Christ appears. Jesus knows that your becoming a holy person will only be accomplished by His grace. It is for His name's sake that all anger is deferred from you eternally. And with His people, the Lord's anger is only for a moment. Turn to Psalm 30. David exhorts the believer to “Sing praise to the Lord, your saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.” “For His anger is but for a moment, His favor for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” But sometimes we become proud as believers. And the Lord is going to patiently, but firmly and definitely instruct and discipline us concerning this sin. David says in verse 6, “Now in my prosperity I said, ‘I shall never be moved.’” “Lord by Your favor You have made my mountain stand strong; You hid Your face, and I was troubled.” “I cried out to you, O Lord; and to the Lord I may supplication: ‘What profit is there is my blood, when I go down to the pit?’” “Will the dust praise You?” “Will it declare Your truth?” “Hear, O Lord, and have mercy on me; Lord be my helper!” You can see how patient the Lord was to him in verses 11 and 12. “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent.” “O lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.” A believer is one who always wants to do God's will in his heart and actions, but he realizes that he is continually falling short and not making progress as he should. But it is the

patience of Christ that lets him come more and more to the place where he correctly understands himself and the depth of his sinfulness; and also at the same time, the greatness of Christ's grace.

Our Lord Jesus Christ does expect us to make progress in holiness and righteousness in accordance with his patience. Both He and the Father expect fruit to be born, the fruit of righteousness. In Luke 13: 6 there is a parable which Jesus tells of a certain man (this man representing God the Father) who comes looking for fruit on a fig tree in his vineyard, and finds none. Then he says to the keeper of the vineyard (who is Christ) "Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none." "Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?" "But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and fertilize it.'" "And if it bears fruit, well." "But if not, after that you can cut it down." What patience is demonstrated here by our Lord Jesus. A good tree must bear good fruit. And the Lord Jesus will prove it to be so by His patient dealing with each of his people. But do not let His patience and kindness be taken for permission to sin. It is never that. If you continue in sin the Lord will deal with you in loving discipline to do whatever it will take to bring to the place of righteousness and truth in your inmost being. This is a part of His faithfulness to you. If a person does not have sorrow, grief, and anguish in his heart over his own remaining sin and corruption when he discovers it in himself; and if he does not with deliberate and prayerful repentance deal with himself in the sight of His loving holy God, then I fear that he does not really know God at all. 2 Peter 3: 15 says, "Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved Paul, according to the wisdom given to him has written you, as also in all his epistles." Verse 9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." The Lord is not willing that anyone trusting in Him should perish. He will show His perfect patience with all of His saints.

Christ taught Paul new qualities of character, by His rich grace working in his life, qualities that would enable Paul to serve God acceptably. This he did by patiently, providentially ordering the situations and circumstances in Paul's life so that the lessons of truth would be learned most practically. He will do the same for us as well, when we trust in Him. We see an example of this in Acts chapter 23, when Paul was brought before council of the Jews in Jerusalem. He looked at them and said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." "And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth." "Then Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!'" "For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" "And those who stood by said, 'Do you revile God's high priest?'" "Then Paul said, 'I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" Paul wanted to bear witness for his lord Jesus, but men were opposing him and they were impatient to silence him. But God was showing him his perfect patience. Paul was imprisoned, but it says in verse 11, "But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.'" He would be able to be a faithful witness and fulfill the ministry to which the Lord had called him. We too, should be of good cheer, for we will be able to praise the Lord for his patience toward us, as well, teaching us to put away sin, and in teaching us to live to His glory. May it be that we have a thankful heart for the Lord's patience with us, at all times.