

September 3, 2017  
Sermon for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Romans 6:9-21

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Romans 12:9–21 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” <sup>20</sup> To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

A golfer on a driving range slices another ball and says, "I'm losing my patience." With that, he quits and walks away, or he walks up to the ball, forgets about stance, grip, and swing, and just whacks it as hard as he can. It doesn't do any good, I know. But sometimes when we lose patience, we are on the edge of giving up. We have tried too hard for too long, and we are beginning to think that it doesn't matter anymore, so we do one of two things: we walk away from a situation, or we do whatever we want. Patience is easy to lose.

That's why Paul's words are a blessing for us today. Paul reveals that patience is a gift from God. It isn't something we have from birth, and it doesn't come naturally to us. Patience is a gift, renewed by God.

In Romans, Paul reveals the bounty of God's mercies. Formerly, we were enemies of God, but now, because of Jesus Christ, we are the people of God. God's mercy not only forgives our sins, but it also transforms our lives (v 1). God's mercy renews our patience in tribulation.

Paul knows that when we undergo tribulation, it is hard not to lose patience. After all, he is not talking about the trials of learning to play golf. Paul is speaking of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh fighting against us, seeking to take away the comfort of our salvation.

Being a Christian is difficult. Confessing God's Word to a world that doesn't want to hear is hard.

Showing love to one's enemies, holding fast to what is good, practicing mercy, fighting for justice, living in peace with others—these things are hard and, at times, we find ourselves saying, "I'm losing my patience."

We are tempted to give up and walk away or to do as we please. If you have ever found yourself falling into either of those errors, listen to Paul, because he has a word of encouragement for you. God in his mercy renews our patience. Standing firm in his grace, we neither walk away nor do what we want. Instead, we are patient in tribulation.

God strengthens us in tribulation, offering us prayer and hope. Patience in tribulation does not walk away but remains constant in prayer.

One challenge to patience is the temptation to give up. We are tempted to lay down our arms in battle, to believe that nothing is worth this suffering, to feel that no one cares anyway and, therefore, to walk away.

In our Old Testament reading this morning, we see that temptation could have overtaken Jeremiah.

Because of God's Word, Jeremiah is a laughingstock (Jer 15:15), a term used earlier of God's Word (6:10); the same word is used, scorn or reproach is also translated as shameful taunting. Jeremiah is a laughingstock! Jeremiah prophesies destruction, but nothing seems to happen. His loneliness (15:17) leads to his complaint and accusation against God (15:18); Jeremiah even questions God's earlier promises (the water imagery in v 18 contrasts with God's promise in 2:13).

Yet in the midst of tribulation, Jeremiah does not walk away. He comes before God in prayer, and in mercy God answers. God responds to Jeremiah's suffering prayer with a promise of steadfast mercy (15:20).

How many of us, when faced with trial would stand proudly proclaiming Christ in the midst of others making fun or badmouthing Christians? Would you really be able to stand up, or would we like Peter either remain silent or when pressed should out with an oath, "I don't know the man!" In this day and age, we could or are faced with that decision on a daily basis.

But it is not an unforgivable sin. Because God, in Christ, has come and endured our trials, suffering for our sin and opening the way of salvation to us. God's great Good News to us is that because of Christ, He is in relationship to us, invites our prayers, listens to our cries and our anger when we are in the midst of suffering, and even gives us His Spirit to intercede for us despite of how or how many times we have fallen to temptation. (Rom 8:26–27).

In the midst of tribulation, therefore, we do not walk away but trust in God's mercy and call out to God in prayer. We are patient in tribulation by being constant in prayer.

Patience in tribulation does not take control but rejoices in hope. No matter how bleak something might seem, God has everything in hand and He promises to never leave us on our own.

Because there is another challenge to patience. And that is the temptation to take control. God, you're taking too long. So we want to impose our will on a situation. We rely on our effort to bring an end to the suffering.

Yet, earlier in his Letter to the Romans, Paul reveals that tribulation in God's hands is part of our growth (5:3–5). Through the endurance of suffering, we are formed in hope; our eyes are turned from this world to the future glory made certain for us in Christ.

This temptation overtakes Peter in his reaction to our Lord's Passion prediction. Peter and the disciples do not have in mind the things of God (Mt 16:23); therefore, they seek to take control of the situation and "save" Jesus' life as Peter takes Jesus to the side and tells Him: ... *"Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."* Matthew 16:22 (ESV) To which we hear Jesus' reply: *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

Jesus then opens their minds to the things of God (16:21) and reveals how that vision changes life in this world (16:24–25).

Rather than be in control of our own life, we live in hope, and trust our lives in the ways of God.

Rather than worrying about our reputation, or what other people think of us we put our trust in God. If a person is so shallow that they would persecute us over our faith in Christ, then why would we really care about what they think of us in the long run? It may only be a short while until their opinions change again and they find something else to be intolerant about. Is their friendship or rather their opinion that valuable that we would risk our salvation on it? In reality, that is what the devil is banking on.

Yet God's certain love gives us hope (Rom 8:31–32, 38–39). Even in tribulation, even when we are just inconvenienced or embarrassed, we know that we are kept by grace in the ways of God; therefore, we do not take control.

We are patient by rejoicing in hope.

Patience in tribulation is like walking a tightrope and not falling on either side.

In the midst of suffering, we don't walk away and we don't take control of the situation, relying on ourselves.

Instead, we trust in God's mercy shown to us in Jesus. He is our lifeline in the midst of tribulation. We stand firm in Him, speaking to God in prayer and rejoicing in the hope that He works all things together for our good.

When Paul encourages us to be patient in tribulation, he puts that encouragement between two other exhortations: rejoice in hope and be constant in prayer.

For Paul, these three things belong together: patience, hope, and prayer. In the midst of tribulation, we remember God's mercies and remain joyful in hope, patient in tribulation, and constant in prayer.

Amen.

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

*S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria*