

CSI:J

Patient

Joshua 9:1-27

August 22, 2010

Welcome back to our sermon series on the book of Joshua. All summer we are reading through Joshua and learning about who God calls each and every one of us to be. What are God's character traits that we can learn from following Joshua. Last week we learned about how to be humble servants and this morning we dive into Joshua cptr 9 to understand the character trait of Patience. Christ followers are called to be patient with others and with God.



Now let me be clear that this isn't my strongest character trait. I'm preaching to myself too. And if I know you this is something that you struggle with at times as well.

I admit I check my text messages while sitting at a red light and have to be reminded to not play with my phone.



This is the kind of culture we live in isn't it. We feed off of immediate gratification. Whether it's our cell phone or the other person who gets upset because we didn't respond NOW. We're not in a patient society, we promote hurry and rushing around. We like micro waves over ovens. How many of you have had fast food this week? It's just easier to hit the drive through than be patient while the water boils and the fresh veggies cook. Now, we justify all our business and lack of patience by calling it multi-tasking, right? Interrupting dinner to take a phone call so you could rush and get more done?

Joshua lived in a slower culture than us. There were no cell phones, high speed trains, airplanes, or microwaves. But they still struggled with patience. That's human nature, it's hard to wait on the Lord when life is rushing by and things need done! This morning's scripture highlights how Joshua and the children of Israel struggled with patience and seeking after God first. We begin in chapter 9; the people in the land fear the Israelites. Word has gotten out about the fall of the walls of Jericho and the battle with Ai. And now the many different nations around Israel are starting to come together. They are recognizing their common enemy. ***Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things—those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)—² they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel.*** (Joshua 9:1-2 TNIV)

And while all these different nations come together, there is one nation very close to Jerusalem that decides another tactic. The Gibeonites live only about 8 miles from Jerusalem. They were literally in the middle of the battlefield. And they had heard about God and how faithful God was to His people. And instead of trying to fight or stand their ground, the Gibeonites take a different course of action. They perform what we might call a Trojan Horse maneuver. They truly believe they cannot win against Israel. They believe in the power of God and so instead, they try to keep their safety any way they can. I'd like to read their deception in **Joshua 9:3-13**.

For some reason, I just love their story. The Gibeonites have it all figured out and have worked up a very tricky ruse. They put on their oldest and worn out clothing and shoes, they get their food all moldy,

they use the wineskins that were destined for the trash pile and then they head out the 8 miles to the Israelites camp. And when they get there, they've already cooked up a good story. They don't mention anything about Jericho or recent battles, they just say how everyone has heard about the power of their God and saving the Israelites from slavery.

And they approach the Israelites in all this supposed humility. Vs. 8 when they introduce themselves, the Gibeonites say to Joshua, "We are your servants." And then again in vs. 9 they say again, "Your servants." They are really flattering the leaders of Israel as they lie about who they are and where they come from.

And the thing is, the Israelites are convinced by this lame Gibeonites story. They don't do any checking. There is no fact check done, no Googling to make sure they are who they say they are, and no validating their identity. ***"The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD ¹⁵ Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.."*** (Joshua 9:14-15 TNIV) And so the Israelites make an eternal pact/oath with the Gibeonites. And did you hear that at the end of the verse 14. "but did not inquire of the Lord." This is the key to this passage. 'They did not inquire of the Lord.'

The Israelites are taken in by a weak story and the greatest of flattery. The Israelites have been successful. After 40 years they are in the Promised Land, they've conquered the biggest city, and now an entire nation comes to them in flattery and the Israelites buy into it all. And so they make the easiest and yet most difficult of mistakes, they don't take time, they aren't patient at all. In fact, the scripture says they 'did not inquire of the Lord.' Even after all they've been through, when the going gets so good they forget who is really in control and who has provided for all of their needs. They rush in on their own rather than taking time to wait for God to guide them and it proves to be a bad deal. So what is patience? And how can we who frequently rush in; learn to acquire it?

Define patience here: *An ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay.*

The steps to building patience in our lives include:

REMEMBERING TO SEEK GOD.

"Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10 TNIV)

It would be easy to sit in judgment of Israel, but how often do we do the same thing. When things are going well in our lives, we forget to stop and give thanks and praise to God. When we get a complement at work for using our natural abilities, we forget to say thank you, I know God was with me. When we get a raise, or a promotion we want to believe we have earned it, deserve it, rather than recognize it as a gift from God. Rick Warren says in God's Power to Change Your Life, ***"If you learn to praise God in every situation, you will develop a wall of praise around your life that even the devil cannot penetrate."*** And that is just what happened to the Israelites.

The story isn't over with the treaty. Of course, it's only 8 miles away, so it doesn't take long for Joshua to figure out what's going on. I'd like to read the rest of the story in **Joshua 9:16-27.**

Can you imagine Joshua once he hears the truth? He and the army ride up to the Gibeonite cities and discover what has happened. There they are stuck with three Gibeonite cities in the middle of the Promised Land and they've made an oath in front of God that can not be broken. All because they didn't stop a moment and consult with God. They were too impatient to wait on the Lord & allow God to lead

them. And now the Gibeonite presence in the land of the Israelites is a constant reminder of their own impatience. But Joshua has to live by the vows the leaders made with God. Sure the people are grumbling and want to take all the land, but Joshua holds firm because they have made a vow with the Gibeonites and with God.

So Joshua saved them from the Israelites, and they did not kill them. ²⁷ That day he made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the community and for the altar of the LORD at the place the LORD would choose. And that is what they are to this day.

(Joshua9:26-27 TNIV)

The steps to building patience in our lives include:

FOLLOWING GOD EVEN WHEN TIMES ARE FRUSTRATING.

A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11 TNIV)

It could have been easy for Joshua to wipe out the Gibeonites. There would have been no reminder of the impatience and sin. But instead, Joshua shows patience this time with the Gibeonites and he's faithful in following God. He has recognized his error & is ready to let the Gibeonites in the hands of God.

Joshua's response is the 'right' one and I know he is being faithful, but it must have been hard. Sometimes it is so much easier to cover up our mistakes. To sweep them under the carpet or use crazy glue to put them back together. Especially those mistakes where we don't follow God. The mistakes in our past that can not be erased. The sins of impatience we committed in our youth when we were young & foolish or the skeleton in our closet we are sure no one will be able to forgive. But guess what, God knows—you can't hide them from God & Christ died to offer us forgiveness. All we have to do is turn it over & give God control.

God forgives us, just as he forgave the children of Israel, but the Gibeonites always lived only 8 miles away as a reminder to take time & wait for God. We know this because there is an incident between David and Saul over this ancient covenant with Joshua. And the same is true with us. While we are forgiven, those past impatient moments follow us each and every day, they are out 8 miles away.

The steps to building patience in our lives include:

MOVING FORWARD

Those lingering moments of impatience are reminders of how not to live. God can use, even those painful moments, those Gibeonites living only 8 miles down the road and use them as a reminder to turn toward Him. Forgive and forget is not in scripture. We can't forget. Joshua and the children of Israel for centuries couldn't ever forget the Gibeonites. But God used them like a beacon and a lighthouse to remind the children of Israel to be Patient. To seek God first, to follow God even in the frustrating times and then to move forward.

AND NOT FORGETTING THE PAST

Ultimately, this is the lesson of this passage. It all hinges on vs. 14. "***The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD.***"

We live in a society that is all about getting `er done. Larry the Cable Guy may joke about it but it is no joke. Hurry up & cram as much into a week as is humanly possible is not the way God wants us to live. And it doesn't fill our lives with joy but anxiety.

Drs. Myer Friedman & Ray H. Rosenman say that 90% of heart attack victims have type A 'hurry up personalities.' No time to wait on anything—even God. How sad. I believe what causes this rush/rush impatience is really a lack of peace, the peace of Christ that is promised to us.

We rush often b/c we aren't sure God is going to come through. Don't forget what God has done in the past.

Joshua finally got it—but too late. He & his descendents had to live with the enemy for centuries. May we be smarter and take time to hear and reflect on the words of Proverbs 16:32: ***"It is better to be patient than powerful. It is better to win control over yourself than over whole cities."***

Our true happiness and a powerful faith comes through patience with the Lord our God. And so as you go this week, walk with God in patience.