

Title: Untangling the Mess (I Thessalonians 5:12-15)

Patience: We use a few knotted strings, with various degrees of knots, and let several people get the knots out as I shared the message. Some obviously took longer and more patience to untangle than others.

We also illustrated it with Abraham and him showing grace by not limiting others to act on their own convictions. He chose not to take any money from the king of Sodom but don't limit the Amorites that fought with him from receiving their own pay for delivering their people and goods back to their care (Genesis 14). This also made Abraham a man that was extremely approachable. That even these men were willing to risk their own lives for him and Lot and they didn't have to worry about him condemning them if they chose to receive payment for their service.

You see, once upon a time my pretty bride asked me to fix a problem she had with three of her finely chained necklaces. Three separate neckless that were so twisted and knotted and crossed linked together that none of them could be worn... not even as one. What did it take to get them around her neck again? Time and patience...

Patience upon patience... that's what it took to UNTANGLE these badly tangled, necklaces. Did I say, patience? It was the only way possible... some things cannot be untangled in a hurry. It was one chain, one knot, one link at a time... weaving them, in and out and in and out, until the tangled mess became a beautiful prize to hang around her neck once again.

People are the same way... we often find ourselves entangled in a web of messed up relationships, that are tangled up with problems upon problems, and the only way to untangle it all is by patience. Think about it... some of your friends, family and coworkers are tangled up in bad relationships, deceived, trusting lies, living with serious issues... and it's all intertwined, twisted, knotted and linked together. Some are problem makers and others are living wounded and hurt...and many are frustrated and defeated as they try to untangle the mess. And living in a world that has learned how to function from our disfunction... doesn't make the issue any easier. Moses reminds us that BEFORE and AFTER the flood every thought, imagination and intent of man's heart (minus God establishing our thoughts for our good and His glory), are desperately entangled in a web of wicked and self-centered motives. We, like Noah, more than ever need God redeeming grace (Genesis 6:5 ; 8:21).

So how do we do it? How do we serve and help them? I suggest to you that you handle it carefully and with patience... yes, my friends, with patience... patiently and passionately, one twist and turn at a time.

Patience... to bear and forbear is something we all desperately need from one another, even more than we want to personally admit. And, if we'll be honest with ourselves, the balance, between what we demand FROM others and what we FEEL like giving them, is too often tipped to our advantage. Therefore, we approach the tangled mess with self preservation and not patience.

What is patience? Is it magic? Does it just happen? Not at all. Patience, like any good fruit, is a combination of elements of goodness, kindness and compassion that's been

proven through tribulation (Ephesians 2:4 ; Colossians 3:11-13 ; 1 Thes 5:12). It's when someone has just enough knowledge, insight, time and concern to work graciously, gently and purposely with someone or some thing—without quickly giving up or intentionally damaging what they're working on. Because they have learned life and dealing with problems is not a cookie cutter issue... it's tough and hard and challenging but well worth it. I'll tell you what long suffering is, it's a gift, a gift that comes through God's wisdom, something we ALL need more and more every day.

I need others to be patient with me... and I need to be more patient with them. Therefore, I need wisdom from Him to know how to live in a world tangled up in its own disfunction. Patience with family, friends and foes... even with myself. Remember this, it take gratitude to filter through the attitudes of those we need to extend the most patience with. And as Honey would say, "Gratitude is the best filter."

The way our society views and values life, marriage, God, politics... we need to help them but if we're not long suffering with them we won't be approachable and our teachings will not be accepted.

What's the goal... loving and living like Jesus!

Jesus entered their hurt (John 11). Though He KNEW exactly what He was going to do, He could still see their sorrow and entered their hurt. Even though He KNEW there was no reason for weeping, He entered their hurt. For He KNEW, way in advance, this was going to be a big time God moment, He entered their hurt. Even when He KNEW it was all going to be ok, He still entered their hurt, related to their pain and comforted them in their grief. (Lessons from John 11 and HOW He loved and led Mary, Martha and Lazarus.)

Compassion will allow our knowledge to see past the confusion, ignorance and misunderstandings of others — so we can feel and enter their hurt, like Jesus.

Help us, Lord, to love, live and lead like You. May Your compassion help us see and enter the hurt of others, even, when we know everything is going to be alright. We're asking You to bridge the gap between WHAT we know and HOW we love. You will be the difference maker in us and for them... Thank You!

As Proverbs 19:22 teaches us: the most desirable and beautiful thing about a person is their kindness and poor man that is (kind) is better than a liar.

So, let's help them untangle the mess: take them back to Genesis... to the command of God, the context of the command, the conditions of the command and the casualties from their disobedience and sin. The consequences and our choice today.

Yes, I eventually got Honey's necklaces useable and back around her neck, praise Jesus, but it didn't happen quickly... glory!!!

Victory and triumph in the kingdom is little by little:

It's the little things like ketchup or a shell in a pecan pie or scrambled eggs. When you invest in top quality food you don't want a nasty condiment to ruin your treat.

Last year, while I was with you, we looked at the refining process and when Jesus is your King and you're His subjects, He's in a process of changing how we smell and taste, from one trial to the next. He didn't do this for Moab, there taste and smell remained the same... but for His people, the intimacy involved in transforming them was unequalled (Jeremiah 48:11).

And, as I mentioned this week, we talked about how the Lord is always leading us in triumph, when He's leading, and He's diffusing the aroma of Christ out of our lives, changing how we smell and taste. And when we deal with problems, treat people, and handle pride in our own lives and relationships with patience, people begin to notice something uniquely different about us. We become more approachable and they open up to us and as they do, the work and witness of His presence upon us can have a richer and deeper effect of untangling the mess they're entangled in.

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