



AND, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ²⁶ He said unto him, *What is written in the law? how readest thou?* ²⁷ And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. ²⁸ And he said unto him, *Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.* ²⁹ But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? ³⁰ And Jesus answering said, *A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.* ³¹ And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, ³⁴ And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. ³⁶ Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? ³⁷ And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, *Go, and do thou likewise.* (Luke 10:25-37)

I am sorry to admit that on some occasions, while traveling the interstate highways, I have come upon traffic jams that have completely stopped traffic – sometimes for hours. As you are allowed to approach the cause of the hold up, you may see rescue vehicles, wreckers, and fire trucks working to untangle the twisted iron and steel of what was once automobiles. You wish they would hurry it up and get the wreckage off the road so that you can continue to some casual engagement. But, as you pass the wreckage, you see victims of the accident bloody and perhaps even dead lain out on stretchers. Some surviving mother or wife is hysterical with tears and despondency. It is then that we recognize our selfish haste to “get the wreckage off the road.”

Patience is a leading virtue in the Christian life. But many of us, including me, sometimes forget patience in the smoke and dust of the moment.

Look at the story of the Good Samaritan above. He had business in Jerusalem, yet he took the time and patience to help the Jewish victim on the wayside. Jews, by the way, would not so much as touch a Samaritan since they considered them an unclean people. Let’s count the ways this Samaritan had patience in helping the wounded Jew. It is easy to discover the many salient acts of mercy the Samaritan provided, if we have the patience to examine the text:

1. “. . . . *a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was:*” He did not pass by on the other side as the priest and Levite had done. One would have expected those two to help, but not the Samaritan.
2. “. . . . *and when he saw him,*” He SAW the man – he did not simply look upon him, but saw all of his hurt and misfortune. He cared enough for a stranger to SEE his needs.
3. “. . . . *he had compassion on him,*” Compassion means more than sympathy. Compassion is the Christ-like quality of actually feeling the pain of another in their distress.
4. “. . . . *And went to him,*” Not in a manner of curiosity, but seeking what might be done to help this poor man.
5. “. . . . *and bound up his wounds,*” The man could have died had this man not have bound up his wounds and stopped the bleeding. This was time consuming, but patience is borne out of a Godly recognition that we are oftentimes God’s Hands.
6. “. . . . *pouring in oil and wine,*” He expended expensive oils and wine in treating the man. Life of any creature is more important than mere luxurious possessions. The Samaritan not only labored over the man, but shared his possessions with him.
7. “. . . . *and set him on his own beast,*” He had an animal to ride, but he gave his ride to the wounded man and walked himself.
8. “. . . . *and brought him to an inn,*” He took the man to a place of shelter where he might recover his strength.
9. “. . . . *and took care of him.*” Not only gave him room and board, but CONTINUED to care for him.
10. “. . . . *And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.*” Is this not perfect patience and compassion? Even while on his business journey, he still took the pains of seeing that the wounded man was cared for in his absence. His compassion was not only a PRESENT concern, but a future one as well.

I will append a beautiful example of patience Niki Sepsas, my good old friend and former roommate at West Point, many years ago, shared with me recently:

This past week I was on a four and a half hour, nonstop flight from Seattle, Washington, to Atlanta, Georgia.

In all my years of traveling, I have learned that each time a plane has the opportunity to stop, there is potential for unexpected challenges. Flight delays, weather and airline crews can create unanticipated challenges on any trip. Therefore, I always try to fly nonstop between my destinations.

About an hour into this particular flight, the Captain's voice rang over the intercom. He asked if there was a physician or nurse on the plane. If so, he asked them to identify themselves by ringing the flight attendant call button beside their seat. I listened carefully but heard no one ring their bell. I immediately began to wonder what was happening.

In a few minutes the Captain informed us that there was a medical emergency on board and asked again if there was a physician or a nurse who could help. When there was no response, we were told that we were going to make an emergency stop in Denver, Colorado. He apologized but told us that there would be a medical emergency team waiting to meet us at the gate and that we would probably only be delayed by about thirty minutes. Though it was necessary, we knew we would all be inconvenienced by the extra stop.

About half an hour later, we landed at Denver International Airport and the medical crew immediately came on board. However, everything took longer than had previously been expected. An elderly gentleman, about 95 years old, had suddenly taken ill. It was not clear whether he had experienced a stroke or heart attack.

Even after the gentleman was carried off of the plane, we still sat there for quite a while. The original "short" stop turned into about an hour and a half.

When we finally pushed back from the gate and were in the air, the pilot apologized profusely for the unavoidable delay. He said that since the stop had taken longer than expected, those passengers who needed to make connections in Atlanta would miss their flights but would automatically be booked on the next flight out.

You could almost hear the moans and groans throughout the airplane of everyone who was being inconvenienced by the unexpected stop. Then the pilot did one of the classiest things I have personally ever seen or heard anyone do.

He spoke into the intercom and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I thought you might be interested in one bit of information. The elderly gentleman who was taken off the plane was a Marine in WWII.

I am holding in my hand a copy of the Congressional Medal of Honor that was awarded to him and signed by President Harry Truman in 1945."

The pilot went on to say, "I realize that we have all been inconvenienced today. However, in light of the fact that this gentleman was a war hero, and was inconvenienced for four years of his life in order that we might experience the freedoms that we enjoy today, I thought you all should know that."

Immediately the airplane was filled with applause. Everyone was cheering and so pleased to know that the gentleman had been cared for in a way that was fitting and appropriate.

As we continued to fly, I thought to myself, "Isn't that interesting? We were concerned that we were inconvenienced for a couple of hours and yet, this gentleman's entire life was interrupted and inconvenienced for over four years while he went and fought in a war to protect the freedoms and values that we love and hold dear in this country today."

I breathed a prayer for the gentleman and asked God to bless him for all he had done to help us understand what freedom is all about.

History does not entrust the care of freedom to the weak or timid - Dwight D. Eisenhower