

Respectable Sins: Impatience & Irritability

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, October 17th. As we continue in our series, Respectable Sins, this morning, I'll just refresh a few things we've considered so far.

Because I don't know about you, but when I was a person in the pew listening to sermons Sunday after Sunday, stuff would just go by. So I'd be in a sermon series at a church, and I'd forget. I would just forget. So from week to week, I'll just recap a few highlights from our introduction. So we've recognized that sin can be defined as any failure to conform to the moral law of God in attitude and in nature, or in act as well.

And sin can be reflected in our actions, our attitudes, but also our moral nature, the internal character of who we are as individuals. Sin isn't something we can brush off or minimize. It has serious and eternal consequences. But thankfully, we also recognize that our sin can be forgiven by God. It will be forgiven by God.

[1 : 09] But only one way. By confessing our sin and by receiving God's forgiveness. And that whole process was only made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

And if it's helpful to think of it this way, respectable sins are the ones that we may tend to minimize or disregard, or in the very least, we tolerate them.

I hope you've come to recognize that. This morning, we're going to be considering the sin of impatience. And as I've come to consider it, the twin sin that impatience has, which is irritability. I grew up with a set of identical twins. So we went to play school together. Then we went on to elementary school, to junior high.

We diverged. They went to university in one way. I went to university in a different way. But I know them, and I knew them, and I know them still well.

[2 : 20] And I always found it hilarious that people couldn't tell them apart. So they were identical, no question. But for me, while they definitely looked very similar, very, very similar in fact, and they were connected, they looked different.

Their likes and dislikes were different. Their personalities were different. They looked different to me. But there's no question, as I said, they were connected, just as siblings are naturally connected, but even more so as genetic, identical twins.

Why do I mention that? Well, it's hopefully so that you can get some context for how I've come to see impatience and irritability as twin sins.

They're definitely different in many ways, and they've got different characteristics and different qualities, but they also have a very direct connection to one another.

And we're going to look at that this morning. We can experience impatience without it leading to irritability. I think, hopefully, you can recognize that. But often, these two unique sins are more connected than we may realize.

[3 : 37] So we're going to consider three main points this morning as we explore the sins of impatience and irritability together.

First, how do we identify impatience? I could make you wait for the answer and see how long it lasts. Why should we be concerned about impatience?

Why is it a big deal? And how can we correct impatience or seek to correct it in our lives? Well, you'll notice maybe that irritability doesn't receive top billing there, right?

But you'll come to see this direct connection as we continue this morning. So first, how do we identify impatience? What is it?

Well, one definition I read said, Impatience is a strong sense of annoyance at the usually unintentional faults and failures of others.

[4 : 41] That impatience is often expressed verbally in a way that tends to humiliate the other person or people who are the object of the impatience.

Does that make sense? Impatience, friends, impatience is one of, if not the worst sin I deal with personally.

There's confession and vulnerability for you. It's not that I have unrealistic expectations of other people. Not at all. It's that I hate to wait. I can't stand it.

I cannot stand it. I was reflecting on it this week and I was thinking, last weekend I had to go and pick up a prescription. I phoned ahead two days on the phone line and pre-booked it.

And I thought, that saves them time. It saves me time. Perfect. I show up and they said, yes, it's being filled. Give us some time.

[5 : 41] I just about lost my mind. Just inside, I thought, but I, but how could you do this to me? I thought ahead.

I used your handy dandy system and here we are waiting. That's not right. Well, I'm a big sire. Michelle would confirm that.

Sometimes it's just a way of me decompressing. So, we have a relatively small main floor. So, I will be in the other part of the main floor watching TV or whatever.

And she'll hear a sigh. Or just a big sigh. And she'll say, that was a big sigh. I'll just say, ah, I was just decompressing. Sometimes it's how I decompress or how I relax.

But it's usually how I express my impatience in circumstances. If you want to tell that I'm getting frustrated, you'll hear me sigh. Perhaps. And maybe it's less directly hurtful towards others.

[6 : 43] But it's no less sinful. Can you recognize that? So, how and why do we experience impatience? Well, we live in a society, I would argue, that is based on instant gratification.

Lots of times when I'm at home, looking out the front door, I will see an Amazon truck drive by, stop at my neighbor's houses, various neighbors. Instant gratification, right?

I can go on Amazon. I can order something. And three to five days. Better not be longer than five. Three to five days, ding dong, shows up at my door. I didn't have to go anywhere.

But it's that instant gratification sense that we have. Almost before we identify a need or a want, we probably have a way or can find a way to satisfy it.

We don't have to wait very long. We live in a world where our circumstances can largely be shaped and customized exactly the way we want them to be.

[7 : 50] We've created the expectation that the world should move at our pace. Can you recognize that? That it should conform to our personal preferences.

Well, impatience is absolutely a sin. But particularly for Westerners, I would argue.

One quote I read that just nailed it said, Wealth breeds technology. Technology breeds desires. Desires breed demands.

Demands breed impatience. Impatience. And impatience is a sin, this quote said. Since we, Westerners, are very rich, we have ample opportunity to live in a perpetual state of impatience.

Do you recognize that in your life? I thought, wow, this is more conviction than I want as I prepare for a sermon. We've trained ourselves to expect instant gratification is normal.

[9 : 02] So much so that even the most minor inconvenience in our lives tends to send us into a spiral of impatience. I waited maybe 15 minutes for that prescription.

I was not happy. So what are some of the ways we might experience impatience? Well, other people, right? I remember, so my parents grew up with, my parents grew up.

My parents raised three boys who all lived in the same house with them at one point. I remember my dear father trying to get people motivated to go to church on Sunday mornings.

There was a span of time I can remember where he was trying to motivate three teenage boys and his wife. And finally, I remember, I don't remember exactly the tipping point, but there came a point where my dad would just go out to the car.

He would go out to the car, sit quietly by himself, listen to CBC, and just wait. He just waited.

Usually I was first, by the way, into the car.

[10 : 11] But I would sit there saying to him, Dad, why aren't you getting annoyed? And he just said, my annoyance is not going to change the circumstances. I remember my dad would drive me to university.

And it drove me crazy that he wouldn't honk at somebody who cut him off or get annoyed. And he said, all it does is raise my blood pressure. He said, I'm not going to suddenly change their behavior

by something I do or say.

Michelle often says, one of these days when I get annoyed in traffic, someone will follow us home. I don't get crazy annoyed, but I have a sense of justice.

We'll get to justice and anger next week. But our circumstances can also be an issue, right? Our financial circumstances, the circumstances we find ourselves in with our health, that can make us impatient.

When, for people who are teaching children, you can remember probably teaching your own children. We get impatient as parents, right? We have an expectation of, well, they should be learning this more quickly.

[11:17] Or trying to teach a child how to read or do different things. For the most part, I hope we're patient. But you could probably remember times when you lost your patience. What about being impatient with God?

What about a sense that God is not answering our prayers? Not responding in the way we want? Not responding according to our timing, our expectations?

Impatience with God. Second point this morning, why should we be concerned about impatience? Well, the respectable sin of impatience is a lot more palatable to us than a sin like stealing or adultery, right?

We talked about this at the very beginning of the series, is that the top ten, yikes, those are scary. I'll never do those. And yet, there's a whole host of other things that don't seem to concern us that much.

Because we think less of them in terms of severity or impact or things like that, we think less of them.

[12:32] So as a result, can you recognize we may commit more of those? We've all likely heard the expression, patience is a virtue.

Yet, I believe that for some people, patience has come to be seen as a weakness. Somehow, we've become comfortable with the idea that by expressing impatience, we can force our circumstances.

Force a change in them. Force the behavior of other people to change. Can you recognize that?

When you express impatience to someone else, you're putting them in an uncomfortable position, hoping, probably, that they will act, they will respond, they will change.

Is that fair? Our world seems to have adopted the idea that expressing impatience helps to get people moving, right?

Turn up the heat a little, maybe we'll get some action here. It helps, we perceive, to get things done to motivate people. But even more than that, can you recognize that impatience directed at someone else is just us trying to get our way?

[13:53] It's important to recognize that impatience is directly tied to that sin we explored last week. Selfishness. Impatience is generally self-seeking.

It puts us first. It suggests that our desires and our needs are more important in any situation than anyone else's.

Have you ever caught, here's a challenge for you, have you ever caught yourself seeking to justify your impatience? You probably heard a little bit of that in what I said.

Well, I called ahead. I followed the rules, so why am I waiting? So do you see that we're attempting to create a byproduct of a stressful life or challenging circumstances there, being impatient, saying, it's okay, I'm busy.

I'm justified in being impatient. So do you seek to tell yourself that impatience in you is okay because you're busy, you're stressed, you don't have time to wait for someone else or something else or for God?

[15:14] So let's consider it for a moment. Why is impatience sinful? Well, impatience, I think you'll agree, generally manifests itself as a result of thinking that we are owed something.

Can you recognize that? Most often, the thing that we are owed is owed by someone else.

And we usually think of it as owed to us instant gratification now. Think about the times that you've been out shopping or in a situation interacting with others.

How often do you see, just in general, impatience around you? If you haven't thought about that, do that this week. Watch for people being impatient.

Often, I get to the front of a line and will apologize to the person who is serving the people around me for what I've seen them have to live through, have to deal with, have to essentially swallow.

[16:24] I went to registries one time, which is a great place to wait. And I was in the line and I observed a lady who had had enough behind the counter.

She was mad, barely holding her cool. She was annoyed. Now, to be fair, she was hearing the same questions over and over again.

And that's probably her job. She probably has the same questions, the same interactions, the same people expecting to be served immediately.

But she was cranky. She was like, hey, no problem.

Yep, whatever you need. Yep, sure. Boy, tough day. Hey, could it go better for you? And she appreciated it, right? But I want you to think about that.

[17:20] How often are you out somewhere and you see people in a lineup around you or you interact with someone that you love and you spend a lot of time with or talk to a lot and you recognize impatience in them?

It's a common symptom of society and COVID has not helped. Right? Right? It has shone a light onto that quality and so many others of these respectable sins that we're studying in this series. We're seeing these things amplified in us because we're being put in a pressure situation, in a situation that is unknown to us. Question, another question for you.

I'm full of questions today. When you're kept waiting and start to become impatient, how long is your fuse? I'm just going to let that sit there for a second.

How long is your fuse when you're kept waiting? When do you transform from Dr. Jekyll, mild-mannered, agreeable, friendly, to Mr. or Mrs. Hyde, annoyed, irritated?

[18:33] Cranky. When do you find yourself starting to get cranky? When does your impatience turn to irritability? Irritability can be described as, defined as, hear this, the frequency of impatience.

It's the ease with which a person can become impatient over the slightest provocation. The frequency of impatience is irritability.

Have you ever been hiking or gone on a long walk and had a small rock in your shoe? It can be pretty annoying, right? But have you ever had even a small rock in your shoe and had to walk for a long distance?

I've done that before, gone on a hike and thought, eh, whatever. But that minor annoyance, do you recognize that over time it can become significant? It can make you incredibly cranky.

So wouldn't it have been easier to stop, to recognize that little annoyance and seek to remove it before it becomes a huge problem? Well, the same, I think, can be said of impatience.

[19:46] If we don't recognize it, if we don't give it up and ask God to help us deal with it, that little rock of impatience can become a boulder of irritation.

An author I read this week said, Most of us can become impatient at times, but the irritable person is impatient most of the time.

The irritable person is one with whom you feel you have to tiptoe or walk on eggshells around. I think we all perhaps know somebody like that.

The person, this person is no fun to be with, but unfortunately, family members and co-workers sometimes have no choice. That's what the quote said.

Do you know anyone like that? Someone with whom you never know what you're going to get. And that's not Forrest Gump, like a box of chocolates.

[20:47] It's not the good kind of chocolates when you don't know what you're going to get from another person. It causes stress. It causes anxiety. And frankly, we have enough of that right now without tension and irritability amongst other people.

Sometimes you wonder about this kind of person, whether they'll be in a good mood or irritated by everyone and everything they encounter. Glass is half full kind of people.

People who seem to be annoyed by anything and everything. So for someone who is constantly impatient and irritable, they've fallen into a pattern about making everything about themselves and their needs.

That's why they're irritated. That's why they're impatient. Because they're constantly looking for, what have you done for me lately? Their expectations of their circumstances or of other people are me-focused.

We likely all know people like this. And at times, do you ever recognize that person in a reflection? Being constantly annoyed and irritated can be an exhausting way to live.

[22 : 08] If you picture a completely still pool of water, can you picture that in your mind? It's serene. It's peaceful.

It's calm. Right? An irritable or impatient person can be like dropping a rock into the middle of that pool. They tend to create chaos and disrupt peace and calm.

The ripples and the ripple effect of that. It can be exhausting, friends, to be that person. Exhausting to be around a person like that.

But more than being exhausting, it is sinful. So our third point this morning, how can we correct impatience in our lives?

You may be wondering already, aren't we going to get to any Bible verses? We will. I don't always pepper them throughout necessarily. But a tendency to be impatient may reveal that we're intolerant of other people.

[23 : 16] Can you recognize that? We're intolerant of their irritations, their limitations, their challenges. We may be so self-focused, so self-interested, that we don't recognize the other person is doing their best.

Again, going back to waiting in a lineup. Do you recognize that someone who's overwhelmed behind the counter is just getting by? But it reveals irritated and, what's the word again?

Impatient. Thank you. Irritated and impatient behavior is selfish, right? It's when we expect what we want, and as I said before, that we want it now.

And doesn't that behavior sound like the behavior of a child? And even worse than that, a misbehaving child? I remember conversations with our kids over the years.

Yeah, you don't get what you want right now. So you're going to learn limitations. You're going to learn patience, ideally. But we've touched on this a bit already, but can you recognize when you tend to become impatient?

[24 : 33] It's usually, as I've said, that when we are kept waiting, when we have to wait in a situation or in our circumstances. And the very first sermon series I preached at Bremar was about waiting.

Because ultimately, impatience is connected to waiting. But why do we hate waiting so much?

Do you hate waiting? I kind of do. But I believe that ties directly to that instant gratification nature of our society.

How we've been trained by that. How we've been formed by that and not in a good way. We've forgotten what it means to wait. We've forgotten what it means to trust.

We've forgotten what it means to keep our focus not on our circumstances, not on our expectations, but on God. I believe we miss the point of waiting when we see it only from a self-centered perspective.

[25 : 48] Because without the correct perspective, waiting can breed acceptable sins, right? It can breed impatience.

Waiting can breed anxiety and irritation and rash action. We jump the gun, right? When we get impatient and we don't want to wait any longer, we take action.

And not always the right kind. So I believe it's our lack of focus on the purpose and character building that waiting can bring that causes us to experience those less than desirable emotions.

When we lose the focus on the purpose behind waiting or the things for which we might be waiting, that's when we lose our cool, right?

That's when respectable sins take hold. Active and intentional prayer, especially in times of waiting, is what God is calling us to do.

[26 : 56] And as I put that thought down, I thought to myself, would I pray in the pharmacy lineup while I'm getting annoyed? I should. God is not looking for us to plan our steps.

Do you hear that? Not interested in that. He's not looking for us to provide for our own needs. Got that one? He's not looking for us to have all the answers.

He's calling us to draw closer to Him and wait if necessary. Be still if necessary. And just spend time with Him.

Prayer keeps us connected. It reminds us of the true source of everything in our lives. Everything we have, and you've heard me say this before, everything we have is from God.

You've heard that a million times. But can you take it to heart? Everything we have is from God as both our source and our provider and our rock, our foundation, our cornerstone.

[28 : 13] God is our hope. Not only for today, but for our entire lives and for eternity. Isaiah 64 verse 4 tells us, Since ancient times, no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you.

Who acts on behalf of those who act for themselves? No. Those who wait for Him.

What a powerful reminder for us of the unmatched ways in which God will act on behalf of those who wait for Him.

Quick personal story again as I put my finger on my note. I was always looking for a relationship as a young man. I always thought I should have a significant other, I should have a girlfriend.

My mother, God bless her, finally said to me, you need to settle down. And she said, you know why? She said, try not to choke, God saves His very best for those who leave the choice to Him.

[29 : 45] God's choice for me, right back there. So to me, there are two great truths revealed revealed in that passage in Isaiah, that verse.

First, that we are to wait on God. But also, immediately followed by that is if and when we wait on God, He will act on our behalf in ways that we can't even begin to comprehend.

I can almost guarantee all of you as followers of Jesus have experiences in your lives where you have seen God act on your behalf.

And I hope it has taken your breath away because it has mine. How does that make you feel knowing that God, the God who knows you better than anyone else, more intimately than anyone ever has or ever will, will act on your behalf in ways that you can't begin to understand or comprehend.

Only God Himself knows that, right? Only God Himself knows the ways He's going to act. I often think of God thinking to Himself, oh, you just wait.

[31 : 15] God is a loving God who cares deeply for each of you. He has things in mind for you. He has thoughts about you that you can't even begin to comprehend.

And they are grounded in love. Will you wait on God? Psalm 37 verse 7 reminds us to one of my favorite passages.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their schemes.

Can you hear those words? Can you wait on God? When you find yourself in any situation, submit to God.

Ask Him to give you patience. Ask Him to help you keep your focus on Him. Not on the uncertainty of the situation.

[32 : 24] Not on the frustration in the moment. Because by submitting to God for His will for us in the moment, we can keep ourselves from sliding into impatience and irritability.

When we focus on God, whenever we find ourselves waiting, even praying in the pharmacy line, we're far less likely to become impatient and irritable.

What about when it comes to people whose actions or even inactions can cause irritation? Well, Proverbs 19 verse 11 tells us.

A man's wisdom gives him patience. It's to his glory to overlook an offense. It's a biblical principle, friends, that we're called to overlook offenses.

Overlooking an offense demonstrates grace. And in that act of freely extending, freely giving grace to someone else, you'll most likely find that those little daily offenses that used to give you irritation, used to get under your skin, resolve themselves.

[33 : 47] If you forgive someone else, rather than getting irritated with them, make your default forgiveness and grace. You may also grow, and I think you will, to appreciate the same grace, ideally, that God has freely given to you.

Recognize impatience as it shows up in you, whether it's behind the wheel, or in a line, or whatever the circumstances may be.

Ask God to help you to let go of it and rest in him. Head impatience off at the pass, at the pass, before it festers into irritability.

If we allow God to change our hearts, waiting can develop qualities in us. It might almost sound like fruit, like patience, endurance, tolerance, restraint.

When God changes our heart, that can be our default. Helping us to also trust and focus on him in our circumstances, rather than the unknown.

[35 : 06] We're surrounded right now by the unknown, which can cause impatience and irritability. So ask God to draw you back to him.

Patience is not about letting go, or sorry, it's not about giving up. It's about letting go. It's about recognizing that if we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, if we've surrendered our lives and our destiny to him, then impatience and irritability are really not qualities we should exhibit.

So let's be people who recognize the right perspective. By seeking God whenever we find ourselves waiting, seeking to keep irritation from growing in our hearts, and as Paul says in Romans 12, 12, seek to be people who are joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. As we journey through this deeper exploration of some of the specific respectable sins together over the coming weeks, each week I want us to say the words of 1 John 1, 9 together because I think this is critical.

Are you ready? if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[36 : 34] Amen. Amen.