

Meditation #2 – Galatians 5:22-23, “Patience with Providence”

Microwaves. Amazon Prime. Tim Hortons. & Netflix. What do all these things have in common? They can all provide us w/ *instant gratification*. We live in a world of fast food, fast delivery, and instant access.

1. When our smartphones and TVs quickly obey our every demand, we don't always know what to do om those situations where that control is taken away from us. B/c of this, *pandemics* or times of suffering can reveal the impatience of our hearts. In his Covid 19 world we can find ourselves struggling.
2. Our impatience can often show itself in our grumbling, in our envy of others, and even in bitterness toward God for the seasons of life we find ourselves in. Often in the bible, God would bring his people through difficult situations to grow their humility, faith, and patience. Today we want to think about patience with providence.

Patience with Providence

3. According to HC. 26, “*providence is the almighty and ever-present power of God by which he upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty – all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by his Fatherly hand.*” Providence reminds us of God's absolute involvement in this world. It reminds us of who God is, his plans, his rule, his purposes, his timing in all things!
 - a. Sometimes providence can be hard to accept in our lives (as we read, God brings fruitful and lean years, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty). Sometimes God brings about hard situations that last long time and require our patience.
 - b. Think of **Noah** who had to build the ark and preach for around 120 yrs before the flood came. Think of **Abra & Sarah** who were promised a child but had to wait until they were in old age to be given a son. Think of **Joseph** who was unjustly in prison for over 10yrs years before he was raised up 2nd in power to Pharaoh.
4. Today, we continue to find ourselves in a time of adversity w/ Covid-19. What if this pandemic drags on for many years? God's word reminds us that calamites are certain to come. We live in a fallen world & we also have *unique situations* in our own lives that are difficult – old age, disease, seeing loved ones suffer.
 - a. What do we need to remember when our world is upside down? HC 27 reminds us of how God's providence comforts us. The first line says, “*we can be **patient in adversity**...for all creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they can neither move nor be moved.*” Every situation, every season of life, every individual person, is in the hand of almighty God.

- i. In all these situations God is calling us to be patient b/c not only are these seasons in his hand, but **we** are in his gracious hands! And God has shown us his ability to deliver, restore, & exalt his ppl after hard seasons of life!
 - ii. After **Noah** waited for 120 years, God sent rain. After **Israel** wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, God brought them into the PL. After **400 years** of silence and waiting for the Messiah after the prophet Malachi, God sent forth his Son as the Savior of the world. ***We've been waiting upon Xp's return for 2000 years. And in these years of church history there have been *plagues, pandemics, persecutions*. God will be faithful to send Jesus again!
 - b. The Spirit helps us to be patient in adversity. He leads us not to grumble, or to complain, or given into despair, but we trust God right where he has us. He leads us to consider God's purposes for the season of life he has us in. As the hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way," puts it, "*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace, behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face.*"
 - i. This doesn't mean inaction on our part or just sitting on our hands, but it does mean we stay humble before God & consider God's fatherly hand at all times & the testimony of scripture which reminds us that He is faithful to deliver, restore, & exalt all those who wait on him. Indeed, **Ps.25:3** declares, "*None who wait upon him shall be put to shame*"
5. When it comes to God providence, there is not only those exceptional seasons of suffering or pandemics, but there are the **providential circumstances** of life that can be hard to accept
- a. Ex: there are some who are single who desire a spouse which is a good thing, but God hasn't yet provided one. There are some who desire children, which is a good thing, but God has not given this. There are some looking for work, which is a good thing, but can't seem to find a job.
 - b. All of these things are good and God glorifying desires, but they require patience, & these situations teach us to pray like Jesus with submission to God, "Lord, not my will, but yours be done."
 - c. Our temptation in these things is go about sinful ways of fulfilling these things, and to take **shortcuts** because we don't want to be patient. When God was not operating according to Abraham and Sarah's timetable for a child, Sarah tried to hurry God's promise by telling **Hagar**, her maidservant, to go into Abraham so that she might obtain a child by her. That didn't work out well.
 - d. We too can go about fulfilling good desires by sinful means. Some want a *job promotion* so bad that they are willing to cut corners, step over others, or disregard their Christian duties for the sake of status. *Dear listener, are there areas in your life where you are tempted to take a shortcut to get what you want right now.
 - e. The **Lord Jesus** was *tempted* to take the **shortcut** to what God had promised. When Jesus was in the wilderness, Satan tempted him saying, "didn't God *promise* you would be a king? Well, here are all of the kingdoms of the earth. They are

yours if you simply bow down to me.” Here is the easy solution Jesus! Take the **shortcut** that doesn’t include patience and a life of suffering.

- i. But Jesus endured temptation and suffering patiently and perfectly, not taking any shortcuts to the promises of God. The Father exalted him!

- f. God the Holy Spirit is working in us the **patience** of Christ! We can walk by the Spirit as Jesus did b/c we see God is faithful. Richard Hendrix once said, *“Second only to suffering, waiting may be the greatest teacher and trainer in godliness.”*

In times of adversity, don’t miss the character God wants to form in you during these times. It is in these difficult times God the Spirit is produces in us patience, contentment, and joy in the midst of hardship. So, as we go into 2021, may we entrust ourselves to the God who is faithful. As the Psalmist says in **Ps. 31:24**, *“be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.”*

