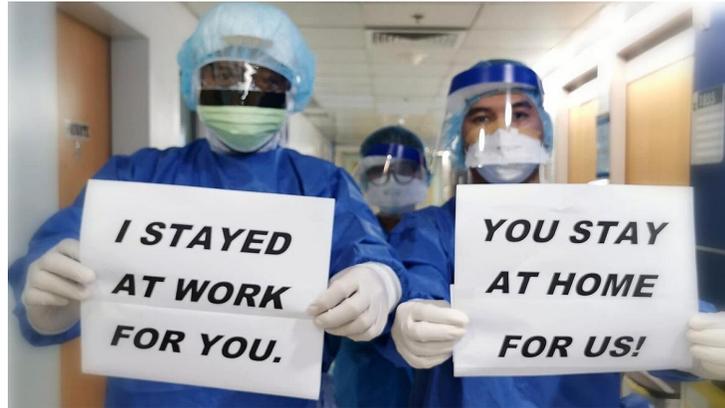


“The Pain of Patience”



“Patience”

*“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*

Galatians 5:22-23

Signs like these from two ER doctors in England have become one of the more memorable images of the COVID-19 pandemic, *“I stayed at work for you, you stay home for us!”* To some of us, the mandate to stay at home has been a journey into isolation and loneliness. For others, this shelter-in-place order has led to a sense of loss regarding our regular community gatherings. Yet, for some this mandatory time away from work is causing great suffering and loss relationally, emotionally and financially. Each of these responses share a common thread...pain. Going to work can be stressful for first responders. Staying home from work is painful for families who live from paycheck to paycheck. In times like these, we all share a common need for...patience. Pain and Patience are inseparable. God uses our painful waiting in times like these to develop within us one of the fruits of his Spirit...patience.

The common definition of patience is *“bearing provocation, annoyance, misfortune, delay, hardship, pain, etc., with fortitude and calm and without complaint, anger, or the like.”* The word “patience” comes from the root word meaning, “suffering”. According to the Scriptures, suffering and patience often go hand in hand. God promises our suffering will produce endurance, character and hope.

“And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:3-5)

Isaiah the prophet spoke to people who were living in a mandatory shelter-in-place exile from their homeland, their worship, their regular daily routines and their everyday social engagements. Some had to deal with feelings of isolation and loneliness. Others found their time in exile to be one of longing for their worship and sense of community (Ps. 137). The vast majority of the people in exile were suffering emotional and financial hardship. Does that sound familiar? Isaiah offers words of hope to people longing to return to life as it once was.

***Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who wait upon the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not faint.***

(Isaiah 40:28-31)

Patience is hard work. Seemingly endless waiting makes us tired and weary. We can easily lose hope. In exile, it is easy for us to forget that our God is an everlasting God who will never grow tired or weary and his strength is more powerful than anyone can fathom. Isaiah begins his prophetic words of comfort with, “*Do you not know? Have you not heard?*” The people in Isaiah’s day lost their focus on the Lord’s powerful promise to bring them out of exile.

Waiting *on the Lord* leads to renewal, strength and hope that God will ultimately prevail. God has promised to lead us out of exile. He can be trusted. Some will come out of this time of exile and soar on wings like eagles. Others will return to work and will run and not grow weary. Many will re-enter life after this devastating season of loss by merely wanting to walk and not faint.

We will all come out of this time in exile stronger and more appreciative of the little things we have taken for granted before COVID-19 ever existed. As we navigate these emotionally charged times and begin the slow process of engaging socially with one another, may we experience a deeper sense of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Together, as one people, we will soar on wings as eagles; we will run and not grow weary, and we will walk again and not faint.