

The Lord does not delay his promises as people consider delay, but he is patient for your sakes, he is not willing that any would perish, but that all would come to repentance. 1 Peter 3.9

Grace and Peace from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

1. A new book, **The Unbroken Thread** is subtitled: *Discovering the wisdom of tradition in an age of Chaos*. There is ample chaos my world. I don't like chaos. I want an order and stability that reflects the traditions of my past.

2. Two and a half weeks ago the church celebrated the ascension of Christ. He now sits at the right hand of God. He intercedes for us before the throne of God and, as our Lutheran Confessions state, "rules the universe for the sake of the church."

3. So, on the one hand I see growing chaos. On the other hand, Christ rules the world for the sake of the church. "Lord," I can easily say, "the world you rule for the sake of the church is increasingly chaotic. Do something!" And his still small voice says: ***The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient for your sake, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*** "Yes," says the still small voice, "I do rule the world for the sake of the church. You are the church, so let's get to work."

Three thoughts on **Patience** from the Early Church.

1. In the first three centuries of the church's existence, it was an oppressed and persecuted minority. Some in the Church were tempted to take up the sword against the Roman oppressors to achieve peace and security. Others were tempted to retreat from the world to avoid suffering and sorrow. The ancient Church rejected both paths in favor of a third – the **path of patience**. One church father called **patience the central virtue of God's character**. Another called **patience the highest virtue**. During a period of deadly plague and intense persecution, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, wrote a treatise **On the Good of Patience** to lead his flock.

2. In this treatise Cyprian stated, "the origin and greatness of patience proceed from God as its author, for from Him patience begins"... "as true Son, Jesus gives true form to the perfect patience of the Father. Although righteous, He bears the sins of the world; though immortal He suffers death; though guiltless, He takes upon Himself the sin of the world..." Cyprian urged Christ's active patience upon his people.

3. Cyprian taught that patience is the Christian form of life and is supremely active...that the aim of patience is not to eliminate or evade suffering, but to bear it, to endure it, and finally to outlast it...patience does not seek fulfillment in either the ruling or rejection of the world. It seeks fulfillment in the redemption of this world, in the repentance of sinners, in the resurrection and in the manifestation of Christ in the glory of His Father. The resurrection and the life of the world to come gives Christians the freedom to be patient, the freedom to turn the other cheek, to love the enemy, to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Patience is freedom because it has no boundaries – both its beginning and its end reside in God, and so **patience is the only path by which Christians are to live.**

Three lessons for the church on Godly patience from 2 Peter 3:7,9,13

1. *But the Heavens and The Earth which are now, by his word are stored up as for fire and are kept for the day of judgment and of the destruction of wicked people.* 2 Peter 3.7

- *Fire:* a symbol of God's punitive and destructive wrath...final judgment.
- *Day of judgment:* refers to wicked people; those who fail to honor what is sacred.
- God will, in his timing, punish and destroy all evil doers who do not honor him.

2. *The Lord does not delay his promises as people consider delay, but he is patient for your sakes, he is not willing that any would perish, but that all would come to repentance.* 2 Peter 3.9

- Godly patience in us will see the Lord's delay as a missionary command and opportunity.
- Godly patience in us will not be curious about the Lord's timetable, but will be concerned about his purpose of wanting all people to come to repentance.
- Godly patience will lead us to that his delay is our opportunity to lead at least one person to a life of repentance and faith.

3. *But according to his promise, we look for The New Heavens and The New Earth, in which dwells righteousness.* 2 Peter 3.13

- *look for...*
 - Godly patience leads us to daily growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - Godly patience through us will live life and proclaim the truth that will enable ungodly to reach repentance.
- *new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells...*
 - All sin that has disfigured God's creation will have passed away.
 - In the world to come God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your [patient] labor is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15.58

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