

The Infirmary of Impatience

“Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes” (Psalm 37:7).

Are you suffering from chronic worrying because your neighbours or friends and family are continually buying more expensive possessions? Are you driven to work excessively in order to maintain the same level of things your neighbours have? Are your health and marriage suffering because of inadequate sleep and family time? You may be suffering from the infirmity of impatience. It results from living above your means in an attempt to match, car for car, room for room, the material holdings of your neighbours. Many Christians are severely crippled by this infirmity.

What’s the cure? God, the Great Physician, tells us to trust His wisdom and to practice patience. *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

God’s prescription for impatience is faith (in His choice of where we belong and how quickly we get there). But most of the time, when the infirmity of impatience strikes, He’s the last one we call.

When we begin paying more attention to our neighbours’ possessions than we pay to our own, impatience begins to infect us. Suddenly, everything we own looks small and inferior.

In an effort to bring our possessions up to standards, we suffer acute money shortage attacks, and we seek emergency cures like second mortgages, consolidation loans, get-rich-quick schemes, and even gambling.

We may take on a second job that God never intended for us to have. But more work to meet higher material demands keeps us from the Lord’s rest and brings on fatigue. Many people on low to middle incomes may lose 50 to 60 cents of every extra dollar earned through higher tax payments and lost Family Support credits, so the extra overtime hours or second job may bring little financial reward. The Great Physician’s cure for these perceived money shortages isn’t more money. We wouldn’t give more sugar to a diabetic.

Instead, His cure involves a more prudent use of the money we already have. That requires a double dose of patience, the very deficiency that caused our infirmity. As part of the cure, there’s a period of convalescence in which we refrain from excessive spending. During this time we learn patience by repaying what we’ve borrowed. Sometimes, this period lasts for years.

It’s a tough pill to swallow, but we don’t get into debt overnight and we can’t expect to get out of debt overnight.

If we refuse God’s treatment, we will take our own medicine. The additional physical strain and stress may stretch us to our limits and bring us to the point at which we want to quit. Hopefully, at this point, we’ll seek the Lord.

Remember, envy is a hard taskmaster that can enslave Christians in financial bondage for many years. *“Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty” (Proverbs 21:5 NLT)*. Confess your struggle with envy and ask the Lord for help. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)*.

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