

Patience With Self

2 Samuel 2:22–23

Where is the Lord working in your life today?

Be on alert for spiritual sloth and pride.

You are in David's palace in Hebron. Surrounded by violence and foolishness, David remains steadfast, prioritizing God's glory above his own. We must resist being sucked into the vortex of confusion and continue to seek the Lord in prayer and work within his timing.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

And Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me; why should I smite you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?" But he refused to turn aside; therefore Abner smote him in the belly with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back; and he fell there, and died where he was.

Reflection

Asahel is given two chances to rethink his decision to pursue Abner. But he persists and perishes. It is a reminder that we cannot do too much in the spiritual life before we have the strength, for we risk running after sin like Asahel before we are seasoned in holiness. We will fall.

St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622 AD), author of the spiritual classic, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, observed that one of the tricks of the devil is to get immature Christians to commit to penances, prayers, or alms that are too demanding for them in their current state. This seems strange. Why would the devil want us to commit to good things? Well, he doesn't. But if he can get you to do good in the wrong way, then that is a victory for him. The devil knows he can discourage a soul by exposing its weakness.

St. Francis counseled that while God sometimes removes sin instantaneously, it is his normal method to do so gradually. He argued that a patient, deliberate, and slow path to holiness is surer, in part because we can truly participate and understand personally the work of God and the transformation of our souls.

"You complain that many imperfections and defects occur in your life, in

opposition to the desire you have of perfection and purity of love for our God. I answer you that we cannot quit ourselves altogether while we are here on earth; we must bear ourselves until God bears us to Heaven... So we must have patience and not expect to be able to cure in a day so many bad habits, which we have contracted by the little care we have had for our spiritual health... The soul needs, if you please, to have patience with all the world, but first with itself." – St. Francis de Sales, Thy Will Be Done

Our success lies not in our strength or speed but in the grace of God. A hasty, Asahel-like "chasing after Abner" is rooted in a kind of discomfort and impatience with oneself, a desire to prove oneself, or perhaps even a self-contempt. We need to remember that God loves us and his mercy is at once all-wise and all-powerful. Instead of trying to win the war against sin all at once (which is likely to fizzle), we need to fight the battles that God is fighting.

In your prayer time, reflect on all the sins and imperfections that you are trying to overcome. Consider why it is foolish to think we can root them all out at once. Consider that the better method is to attack them wisely. Consider that God not only knows them but knows how they are best defeated and in what order. Ask him to help you identify the one that needs attention today and follow him in working on it.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 2 Action Items

Form a spiritual plan for vacation time.

Meditate on how sloth impacts your spiritual life.

Schedule fraternity time.