

☞ Observations from the storm

“I’ve never seen anything like it.” That was my comment early on and subsequently have heard a number of people saying the same thing. Derecho is a new word for my ☞ vocabulary. Who ever heard of a hurricane in the Midwest? So... **never say never**. Anything is possible and what seems impossible isn’t necessarily so.

Garbage cans, some full and some not, were being driven down the street with the gale force winds. The trees in front of our house were being blown and shaken mightily and yet they held their ground. Both of the trees in our front yard are relatively young and therefore had some flexibility in their branches. That flexibility enabled them to bend and sway dramatically without breaking. Sometimes, when God is at work in our lives it may test us and push us beyond what we think we can stand, but **being pliable in the Lord’s ☞ hand is a good thing – Jeremiah 18**.

Those young trees in our yard bent and swayed under the hurricane force wind, but their roots held strong. While it’s a good thing to be flexible with the Lord, it’s equally important to be rooted and established in him. Specifically, the bible talks about being ☞ **rooted and established in God’s love – Ephesians 3:17**. Here’s the deal: his work in us may stretch us and push us beyond what we ever thought we could bear, but if we are confident and firm in our understanding of his love for us, we will be able to stand through it all. Or, if it’s the enemy who is coming against us and threatening to break us to pieces, we can stand firm in the faith knowing that God always loves us.

As I drove around town assessing the damage, of course I saw many trees and large branches broken and on the ground. In many cases, particularly with broken tree trunks, it was obvious why they had broken off. Many of those broken off had clearly died in the middle and thus were susceptible to the power of the winds coming against them. There ☞ was **inner rot that had weakened** the tree. Jesus said it’s what’s inside that defiles us, therefore, we must **guard our hearts. The heart is the wellspring of life – Proverbs 4:23**.

Then, there was the power outage and it became a waiting game. “Will this be the hour,” became, “will this be the day?” For us it was 5 days without power. Fortunately, we had a generator that could provide power for a few things in our home, but the A/C was not one of them. We were quickly reminded of our childhood days without any kind of air conditioning; the heat and humidity were horrible. Our patience was severely tested as we waited for the power company to make the necessary repairs. It was the old saying, “hurry up and wait,” happening in real life.

☞ Waiting requires patience

Psalms 37:7-9

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. **8** Refrain from anger and turn from

wrath; do not fret — it leads only to evil. **9** For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.

Sometimes we simply need to be reminded that this life is not all that there is. God has set aside an inheritance for his people that is beyond measure. As well, this fallen world and those who adhere to its ways will be cut off. So, **remember God's promises – it's worth the wait.**

In 1 Samuel 13 King Saul was waiting for Samuel to come and bless him before going into battle. He got impatient and did the blessing himself and it ended up costing him dearly. He ultimately lost his kingdom because he wouldn't wait.

Never think that God's delays are God's denials.

Patience is a virtue that God is looking for. Will you hang in there and hold on when the wait gets long? I've often commented to people about finding God's will. If you sincerely desire God's will for your life and you obey him while you wait, you can't miss it. But, if you become impatient and try to make certain things happen, you just might miss God's plan. He wants us to wait and follow his plan, not to invent our own plan.

Waiting builds maturity.

Waiting with faith develops perseverance which leads to your maturity and completeness.

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. **4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete**, not lacking anything.

It's the old oak trees that are the strongest. And stronger yet are those that have endured fierce storms.

*--James S. Hewett... When they first manufactured golf balls, they made the covers smooth. Then it was discovered that after a ball had been roughed up one could get more distance out of it. So, they started manufacturing them with dimpled covers. So it is with life; **it takes some rough spots in your life to make you go your farthest.***

Strong faith in God and maturity does not come all at once. It is often gained through willing submission to His love and goodness in the midst of trial.

When God promised the land of Canaan to Israel in Exodus 23 he said he wouldn't do it all at once. He knew it would be too much for them at first and that they would need to increase in order to take full possession of the land.

God is looking for growth in us as well. **Some of his promises require us to be spiritually mature enough to handle it.**

--Chinese Proverb... *Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still.*

☞ **Learn whatever God is trying to teach you and grow!**

☞ **Waiting can lead to a greater harvest.**

James 5:7-8

See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. **8** You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

☞ Why does the farmer wait? For the best time to harvest! **God is always interested in the harvest.**

--Doug Goins... *I had an experience of waiting that was very difficult a number of years ago. Ed Woodhall and I were supposed to fly to Bogotá, Colombia to meet with the leadership of a prison ministry there. We had to make connections in Miami. It was a difficult trip that we didn't really want to make because we had to bring the bad news to our brothers and sisters in Colombia that we were not going to be involved in their ministry anymore, for important reasons. Also, it was a time when the Colombian drug lords were running the country, and American businessmen were being kidnapped off the streets. So, we felt some fear and apprehension. But we knew that it was the right thing to do. So, we left San Francisco at 7:00 a.m., and we were supposed to catch a 4:00 p.m. flight on to Bogotá in Miami, but because of mechanical problems we missed that flight and ended up having to wait for twenty-four hours in Miami.*

Late that night, after a full day of traveling, we were in a shuttle bus being driven to North Miami to sleep in some fleabag hotel that the airline had grudgingly provided for us. We were not in the best of moods, to confess honestly. Ed and I were talking about what was going on: "Why is God doing this? What does it all mean?"

We were the last people to get off the bus. The Jamaican bus driver said to us, "You men are Christians, aren't you?"

"Yes," we replied.

He continued, "I asked God last week to bring me in contact with a Christian who could tell me how to accept Jesus."

*Ed and I both said, "That's what's going on here!" We had the amazing pleasure of praying with this dear brother as he came to faith in Christ. Then God gave us the next day to get our own hearts straight, to pray together and plan together. We were anxious to get to Colombia and get out, yet **God said, "Wait. I've got some things I want to accomplish."***

☞ **Waiting is about trusting God's perfect timing.**

Habakkuk 2:2-3

Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. **3** For **the revelation awaits an appointed time**; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

Perfect Timing – Sweet Comfort Band, Randy Thomas

☞ *You've got perfect timing; **You're not a minute too soon; Not a moment too late; You've got perfect timing**; I can see when you move; I can feel when you wait; You hold tomorrow in the palm of your hand; Everything runs by your master plan; You've got perfect timing*

-- Oswald Chambers... Don't jump to conclusions too quickly; many things lie unsolved, and the biggest test of all is that God looks as if he were totally indifferent.

Examine your heart. Has God made a promise to you that you are still waiting for? Have you developed unbelief regarding his promise or are you still believing? Will you remain patient and steadfast? Will you grow while you wait? Will you trust God's perfect timing and see it through to a greater harvest?

Church, God has made some specific and wonderful promises to OBC; promises of continued growth, spiritual gifts and revival coming out of our church. Will we continue to stand on God's promises to us? Will we obey his leading even if revival is a ways off?

Imagine if we all trusted God completely, knowing his timing and plan is perfect! Imagine if we all resolved to keep on believing and growing no matter how long his promises took! God can use people like that! God can do miraculous things through people who simply
☞ **believe what he says and trust him!**

☞ **Psalms 145:13**

The Lord is faithful to all his promises

☞ **2 Corinthians 1:20**

no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.

Prayer – If there's a promise from the Lord that you've been waiting for I want to encourage you today. God's promises never fail! Let's individually reaffirm our confidence in God. Let's take a few moments to tell God that we still trust him; we still believe him; we still look forward to his promises.

As this video plays let's make this our song and promise to the Lord.

☞ **Video – Standing on the Promises**