

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

## When?

**“The Right Hon. was a tubby little chap  
who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes  
and had forgotten to say ‘When!’”**

*P G Wodehouse, Very Good, Jeeves*

I’m learning to be patient. Those who know me are well aware that I am not the most patient person in the world. Being a stickler about timekeeping, I get irritated when things don’t run to time. If a bus is due at 11.04, why has it not come now it’s 11.06? If a tradesman says it’ll take three days to do a job and it’s not finished in five, I’m not best pleased. I envy people who can “go with the flow” or adjust their expectations “depending on contingencies.” But being patient is hard for me.

But I’m learning ... I expected this Covid-19 crisis to run to a timetable. Once I’d got over the initial impact of it and realised we were likely to be dealing with it for a long while, I began to look for measurable stages, examine dates, formulate plans, work on processes. Government briefings; parliamentary statements; missives from Church authorities ... all subjected to detailed analysis and scrutiny, because I needed to know “When?” My prayers began to echo the plea of the Psalmist (Psalm 6:3) “How Long, O Lord, how long?” I suspect many of you will have prayed the same prayer. Perhaps you’re praying it right now.

But it’s interesting that the Psalm contains no answer to the Psalmist’s plea. God does *not* say, “Oh, sorry. Here’s the timetable you asked for.” No hint is given that it’s ever going to be different. So, at the end of his prayer, all the Psalmist can say is, “The Lord heard my supplications; the Lord accepts my prayers.” All the Psalmist can say ...

Maybe this is all we can say too. Maybe if we voice the “When?”, we need to know there is no answer. Maybe if we express the impatience that is part of our nature ... we can learn how to be patient.

So I’m learning to be patient. It isn’t easy to change the patterns of lifetime, but I’m getting there. When? I’m not at all sure ...

### **A prayer for today**

*O Lord, you wait and wait for me to get things right. Your patience unending.  
So, be patient with me while I try to have a little part of that in my own life. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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