



Malvern Mashal 142



**Patmos 8 The link to the next instalment in the Patmos series
(edited notes included below)**

Patmos 8: Something new about Patmos . . .

A few edited passages from my notes for this week's message: but please do listen to the version with music! [Patmos 8](#)

There's a longstanding tradition that John was not on his own on the island but that a man named Procurus voluntarily chose to accompany him, and that he was the man who wrote down the experience John had as he dictated them to him, and then, after John's release, ministered with him as he passed them around the churches. Procurus is mentioned in Acts 6:5 as one of the deacons who were full of the Spirit and wisdom.

The tradition that John was forced to work down salt or granite mines is less probable for the simple reason that there do not appear to be any mine workings on the island, but what I've only recently discovered is that it is highly likely that there were two entirely separate classes of people who were sent to Patmos.

There were not only common criminals, who were shackled and closely watched and forced to do hard labour, but also political prisoners who had fallen foul of the authorities and who were sent there to remove them from any chance of exercising their influence against Roman authority. Within limits, these political prisoners were free to fend for themselves, al-

though they were given no help whatsoever with the essentials of life.

Tradition has it that John chose a small cave as his dwelling place, a place that is venerated to this day, and which enjoys beautiful views over the sea.

Thlipsis pressure

As we have seen, John experienced considerable pressure on Patmos, illustrated by the fact that he said that he was our *brother* and companion in the suffering and patient endurance that are ours in Christ Jesus. The word used here in Greek is thlipsis, which occurs frequently in the New Testament to describe the extreme trouble and pressure that Christians sometimes face in this world. (eg John 16:33) It speaks of the anguish a woman has in labour, (John 16:21) but still more or a crushing weight that being permanently over someone, trapping and pinning them down, threatening to crush the life out of them.

The sheer number of times this word occurs in the New Testament is a pointer to the fact that this is considered normal for Christians. The wonder is how the early Church continued to grow despite wave after wave of intense persecution, and how it continues to do the same in places like Iran today.

If we are experiencing thlipsis level of pressure, it is so important not to forget the really wonderful times we have had with the Lord,

and all those special times when His presence has been close and His Spirit has led.

Hopes, emotions, and inner dreams all go up and down during Patmos periods. Whilst many of us expect too little of God, some of us end up being swayed by 'hype' into believing for things that God has not promised. If we have a mistaken idea of what we can do or be in a given context, the Lord may well have to prick the bubble and adjust the balance.

Right Expectations

As Samuel Johnson warned, 'Expectations improperly indulged must end in disappointment!' Rather like the man who bought a large RV (Roving Vehicle) and, under the rather naïve impression that this wonderful new vehicle ought to be able to steer itself, set the van on cruise control and wandered back into the cabin to make himself a cup of tea. The effects on the local hedgerows were predictable!

I like what Peter Marshall said: 'God save us from hot heads who would lead us foolishly, and from cold feet which would keep us from adventuring at all.'

But if some of us aim too high and end up like Icarus flying too close to the sun and having our wings clipped, more people set their expectations too low. It is so important that we don't side with Satan's twisted assessment of situations. It's second nature to him to spin a good yarn and to distort the truth. It can be as hurtful and as damaging as the latest revelations on the Hillsborough football Stadium disaster.

How Satan sets about his work

Here are a few typical examples of how he sets about his work. He starts out by saying that 'it', whatever 'it' represents, *can't be done*. If you wisely choose to ignore that and believe the opposite, he might try this for another tack: '*well, if it can be done, you're not the right person to do it!*' That one causes a lot of people to think twice and to hold back.

If *that* doesn't work then he'll try to land this sucker punch: '*and anyway it's the wrong time to do it!*' After all timing is such a crucial thing to get right – but the devil is trying to get us to relegate it to never-never land. All these strat-

egies have to be overcome if we are actually to get anything done – and only you can initiate the fight against these particular giants!

Don't let these clever and condemning words pin you up against the ropes and convince you that you are disqualified. Paul tells us that Jesus has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. We are not outsiders to grace, however bad we may sometimes feel. (Col.1:12)

Incidentally that is the precise time that you may need to round up prayer from others to bring you the reinforcements that you need. Prayer puts things within reach that would otherwise remain tantalisingly out of reach. Time and again Satan loses out when we share honestly with others and pray release of faith into those situations.

How about those times when you have stepped out in faith in the past in all sincerity in the past only to find something not working out? Adjust your sights if need be, but whatever you do don't allow it to bring you to a judging halt.

Setting ourselves free from trauma

Almost all forms of trauma counselling recognise the therapeutic effects of learning to face what has happened, and adopting a different approach to it. CBT Cognitive Behaviour Therapy at its best can be very helpful in this respect, and might well repay following up.

The following exercise (which we have released before) has helped a lot of people to recover from the effects of serious loss and trauma.

First of all, write down the detail of what has happened that caused you loss and pain. Don't leave anything out!

Secondly, either later or better still the following day, write down how you felt AT THAT TIME about those events.

Finally, write down how you feel about these things NOW.

Provided that all three stages have been completed, again and again people report something amazing happening at this point as they

begin to see and make sense of what the Lord has brought to pass through it – far more so than they had been aware of at the time, let alone able to appreciate.

God has put the most amazing and life-giving properties into these unlikely Patmos times, just as He has into other unlikely looking substances. Think of lumps of clay that can be shaped and refined and fired into beautiful teapots, that dispense endless cups of tea. Mmmm!

'No good thing does He withhold from those who are seeking to lead a godly life.'

The message from Patmos is clear:

'To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations.' (Rev. 2:26)

So long as we don't actively set out to oppose His intentions, or give up under the pressure, we will reach the place He has in mind for us – and will be eternally grateful for His faithfulness that gave us the grace to be persistent.

By His grace we will reach the place He has in mind for us – and be eternally grateful for His faithfulness, which gave us the grace to be persistent.

God has a box of tools . . .

We had a lovely group visit us for a retreat the other day in our Sanctuary Shed. At the end I suddenly found myself rather daringly saying, "God has a box of tools. He is going to take one of these tools and place it in your hands now – and you will feel it!" And He did!

For myself, it was a saw. The Lord said, "The teeth are sharp, and you are very determined in sawing a straight line through thick pieces of wood." For Ros it was a spanner to undo things that the enemy had wrenched solid!

Perhaps the anointing may extend to you for this. Imagine the situation and give Him the chance to speak to you, or about someone you love in this respect!