

March 15, 2024

Dear Members and Friends,

There is an interesting psychological concept that is quite well recognised and it should be a part of our lives. It is delayed gratification, or deferred gratification. It is the resistance to the temptation of an immediate pleasure in the hope of obtaining a valuable and long-lasting reward in the long-term. In other words, delayed gratification describes the process that the person undergoes when he or she resists the temptation of an immediate reward in preference for a later reward that is more favourable. Generally, delayed gratification is associated with resisting a smaller but more immediate reward, in order to receive a larger or more enduring reward later. A growing body of literature has linked the ability to delay gratification to a host of other positive outcomes, including academic success, physical health, psychological health, and social competence.

A person's ability to delay gratification relates to other similar skills such as patience, impulse control, self-control and willpower, all of which are involved in self-regulation. And obviously, these characteristics certainly apply to us as Christians. As a person matures, they normally change from wanting, or even demanding, something immediately, for example a baby being hungry, to delaying fulfilment of their desires because of a good reason.

The very obvious example of this in Scripture is the case of Moses. He was raised as the son of Pharaoh's daughter which entitled him to a very high position in the government of Egypt. Very likely, he would have been the next Pharaoh. Occupying this position, he would have had the very best Egypt had to offer, as well as having the people bowing to him as he passed by in the royal chariot or barge. Physically, he could not have had anything more as the ruler of possibly the most powerful country on the earth.

And yet we read in Hebrews 11:24-27, that he gave all this up. "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

He looked to a future reward that he will receive when Christ returns, as we will all receive a future reward. We are reminded of this in Revelation 22:12: "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." As we read the passage in Hebrews, this delayed gratification was the choice Moses made. Obviously, the things Moses had in Egypt were very tempting to hold onto as they gave great passing pleasures. But they were not eternal pleasures which the reward he looked forward to in faith would consist of.

This is shown in Psalm 16:11: "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Fulness of joy is the maximum possible joy and pleasures forevermore are eternal.

It is indeed a matter of faith looking forward to that reward as we live in our current life. Prophecies indicate that the times ahead of us will become more difficult. Some of God's people will possibly be put to death as they have been in the past. But we also have the promise of Jesus Christ as stated in Hebrews 13:5: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" God knows everything we

are going through, and He loves us as His children. We can even read that our death, which will come upon us all regardless of whatever else happens to us, is precious in God's sight. Refer to Psalm 116:15.

One patriarch who went through severe trials for his benefit, as we now understand, still had a positive attitude to God's ultimate plan for himself. At the time he did not understand why he was going through his trial and yet he still stated that after he died, God would have a desire for the work of His hands and resurrect Job. See Job 14:15.

Many have appreciated listening to the Oratorio by Handel titled "Messiah." One of the arias entitled "I know that my Redeemer lives" is very encouraging in regard to the promises laid out before us. This aria is from Job 19:25-27: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another, How my heart yearns within me!"

The phrase "in my flesh" in verse 26 is more correctly translated as "without my flesh" in the *American Standard Version* and the *Jewish Publication Society Tanakh 1917*, and also in some commentaries.

To read that even though Job was sorely tried, his heart still yearned to be in God's presence. This is a very positive example for us in our lives.

We also have another reason to rejoice, not that we have blessings, or abilities, or strengths on earth, but that our names are written in the book of life in heaven. Luke 10:20 informs us of this: "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

So, we have a wonderful future that God has planned out for us, and it is necessary not to seek temporary pleasures that would turn us from God, but to experience delayed gratification, and wait in faith for the reward that God has prepared for us.

In God's service and in Christian love,



Paul Niehoff