

Waiting On God

There is a form of spiritual discipline that is mentioned many times in the Bible, but is not generally understood or practiced by many Christians. There are many scriptures that speak of waiting on God or waiting for God. Either waiting on or waiting for God is essentially the same; it is a form of waiting that is specifically related only to God. There are two forms of waiting; one is waiting for a prayer to be answered in our own lives and the other is what all Christians are waiting for – the second coming of Jesus.

Psalm 25:5 says; 'Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You only, do I wait all the day long'. God is the God of our salvation, and two of the ways we relate to Him is to trust Him and wait patiently for Him; if necessary, all the day long or sometimes, for years. Waiting is connected to that prayer: Show me your ways O Lord; teach me your paths (Psalm 25:4). If we are not prepared to wait for Him, there may be some things we can never learn. Look in Psalm 27:11 & 14; 'Teach me Your way O Lord, and lead me in a level path because of my enemies. Wait for the Lord; be brave and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait and expect the Lord'.

Twice in that Psalm, King David said, wait for the Lord. Again, it is related to David's prayer; 'Teach me your ways O Lord, and lead me in the level path'. It is also connected to his prayer for deliverance from his enemies. Waiting for God is the key to learning His ways, and it is also one of His steps that is sometimes necessary in seeking deliverance from our enemies and from opposition.

In Isaiah 64:4 we see that; 'From ancient times, no one has heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts on behalf of him who earnestly waits for Him'. In this scripture, we get to know God. There are the distinctive marks of the one true God and that is: He acts on behalf of those of His people who wait for Him. One of the ways we need to relate to God the Father, is by waiting for Him to act on our behalf.

What is really involved in waiting for God? Why is waiting so very important? Why is there so much emphasis on waiting for God, in the scriptures? The answer is in Psalm 62:1 & 2 then 5 & 6; 'My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him comes my salvation. He only is my Rock and my Salvation, my Defence and my Fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken. My soul, wait in silence only upon God and silently submit to Him; for my hope and expectation is from Him. He only is my Rock and my Salvation; He is my Defence and my Fortress; I shall not be moved'.

The word 'only' occurs four times in that passage of scripture. If we wait for God to act, and trust in Him, we will not be shaken when difficulties come our way. David also talks about waiting in silence for God or being silent toward God. What is involved here, is the need to focus our whole attention on God. Waiting on God is looking to Him and continuing to look to Him. Waiting is important so that we do not make hasty or unwise decisions or actions; not yielding to outward pressures but focussing all our attention on God and waiting for His will and His outcome. That is why there is so much emphasis written in the scriptures regarding waiting.

What are the results produced by waiting for God? We are acknowledging God in a very special way and are giving Him His rightful place in our lives. Waiting builds a relationship with Him that can't be built in any other way. He is our source and all our needs can come only from God. He is our King and Sovereign and we need to acknowledge His sovereignty. The initiative and timing is with God. We can't tell God when to do things. We have to wait until God - in His wisdom - is ready. We have to acknowledge the fact, we are completely dependant on God and that is very difficult for some of us to accept. Most people have a deep desire to be independent of God and waiting for God deals with that desire for independence. Waiting for God develops stability and is mutual. As we are waiting for Him, so He also waits for us. Isaiah 30:18 says; 'Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you and waits on high to have compassion on you; for the Lord is a God of justice. How blessed are all those who wait for Him'.

We often think it is only us who waits for God, but we can be encouraged by that scripture. It says God waits for us. We need to be patient. Other results that come from waiting for God are endurance, steadfastness, patience and spiritual maturity (James 1:2 & 4). The end result of constantly waiting, is a people who are fully developed, fully mature and lacking nothing. The process of becoming spiritually

mature can be very painful because our faith is always being tested (verse 3). As we undergo and stand the test, that develops perseverance and out of that perseverance, comes maturity and a Godly character. Perseverance means holding on; not giving up when things become tough. It is easy to wait when we are distracted by being busy, but waiting is extremely difficult when there is nothing to do but wait in silence. We need to wait because God is the only solution to our problems. Trusting God in a difficult situation can be a trial, especially when the opposite happens to what we have been praying for. Waiting and trusting God in these circumstances, strengthens our maturity and character. Waiting also brings about peace and serenity.

We are told not to be anxious or worried about anything but in all things with thanksgiving, continue to make our wants known to God (Philippians 4:6). The key here is to continue; persevere. We need to have the correct attitude and accept God's infinite wisdom, and we must delight ourselves in the Lord before He will give us our desires. Psalm 37:4 & 5, 7 & 9; 'Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires and secret petitions of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him and He will bring it to pass. Be still and rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him ... fret not yourself – for it only leads to evil doing. For evildoers will be cut off – but those who wait for the Lord (in the end) shall inherit the earth'.

Waiting patiently deals with our tendency to fret. The opposite of fretting and feeling anxious is peace, acceptance and serenity. In Psalm 37:8 we are told to cease anger and forsake wrath. We can not be peaceful and wrathful at the same time, so if we put away our anger we will have peace. The difference between anger and wrath can be seen like this: anger is like a pressure-cooker of water that slowly comes to the boil. Wrath is when the water and steam explodes all over the kitchen, scalding anyone who is too close. If we give in to anger, in due course, wrath will come and hurt those closest to us. We need to nip anger 'in the bud' so it doesn't develop into full blown wrath. We need to turn the heat off, but how do we do that? By waiting patiently for God. Waiting and trusting deals with fretting, anger, wrath and anxiety (along with high blood pressure, stomach ulcers, eczema, heart problems and stress). Learning to wait on God, develops peace, serenity, humility, meekness and gentleness which brings joy, good health (Proverbs 3:8) and a massive inheritance. The inheritance (the earth) is for those who have learned to wait. In Matthew 5:5, Jesus said; "Blessed are the meek (gentle, humble) for they shall inherit the earth."

Supernatural transformation; a miraculous change that happens within us, is another result of waiting on God. Here are some beautiful promises for those who have met God's conditions. Isaiah 40:28 to 31; 'Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, Creator of the ends of the earth, does not grow weary or tired; there is no searching of His understanding. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Even youths shall faint and be tired and young men shall stumble and fall exhausted. But those who wait for the Lord shall change and renew their strength; they shall lift their wings and mount up close to God as eagles mount up to the sun; they shall run and not get tired, they shall walk and not become weary'.

This scripture shows us that at the end of our natural strength, if we wait for the Lord, He will give us His supernatural strength. This scripture says, "They will change and renew their strength." The Hebrew translation is literally; "They will exchange strength." When we have come to the end of our own resources and there is nothing more we can do except wait for the Lord, in the place of our weakness, God will give us His divine, supernatural strength. Waiting for the Lord is the key to experiencing the supernatural. It is a foolish thing to do, to try to help God answer our prayers. We need to have a 'hands off' approach and let God do it all, unless He clearly tells us otherwise.

Two examples of people trying to 'help' God out, are these two common scenarios: A woman feels she is ready for marriage and prays for a husband. After several years of waiting she becomes impatient and marries a non Christian. At first everything is rosy until the woman wants to teach their children about the Lord and the husband forbids it. There is contention in the home and they end up in a messy divorce, with several hurt children in tow. The children are forced to endure years of two separate households with two separate sets of values and possibly step-parents as well. If the woman had waited for God, she would have saved herself and her children, from years of unhappiness. When it comes to marriage – it is better to remain single and wait for God's choice of spouse for you, than to marry a non believer. We are not to be unequally yoked with a non believer (2 Corinthians 6:14) so if there is someone out there praying for a spouse – even if it takes years – wait for God and continue serving Him faithfully while you wait.

Scenario number two: You have been born-again and want your spouse and adult children to be saved too. You don't understand their lack of enthusiasm regarding salvation and so you bombard them with scriptures and preach to them every day. You demand God save them too and you become worried about them going to a lost eternity. Your incessant preaching causes real contention in the home. You don't want to wait; you want them saved immediately. Eventually your adult children have had enough and refuse to have contact with you, and then your spouse leaves. In this case, having wisdom and praying silently for them would have been the better option. Wait for God, because He saves each person at the correct time for them – not the correct time for us. While you wait on God, pray faithfully and quietly for your spouse and children to come to the Lord – and claim these scriptures; 'As for me and my household; we will serve the Lord! (Joshua 24:15)' 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved; you and all your household (Acts 16:31)'.

Here is another tragic example of catastrophic consequences that actually happened, when someone, trying to 'help' God answer their prayers, interfered in God's plan and the 'answer' went terribly wrong. Abraham and Sarah had come to the end of their own physical strength; Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah was 90 (Genesis 17:1 & 17) and way passed child-bearing years (Genesis 18:11 & 12), but God had promised Abraham a son and heir (Genesis 15:1 to 6). However, Abraham failed to wait for God. In fact neither Abraham nor Sarah, were initially prepared to wait for God. With Sarah's suggestion and consent, Abraham went ahead and sired Ishmael with Sarah's maid, Hagar (Genesis 16:2 & 3). Ishmael means; 'God has heard' or 'God hears' (Genesis 16:11). The Lord said Ishmael would be a wild donkey of a man; his hand would be against every man and every man's hand against him, and he would live in hostility to the east and on the borders of all his kinsmen (Genesis 16:12). What an appropriate description of the Arab and Middle-eastern nations; the descendants of Ishmael and the problems they still cause the sons of the promise; the Jewish people. The situation with Ishmael caused contention between Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 16:4 to 6); contention between Hagar and Sarah when previously there was none (Genesis 16:4 & 6); two dreadful and terrifying ordeals for Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16:9 to 11 then 21:9 to 19) and contention between Ishmael and Isaac (Genesis 21:9). None of these things would have happened if Abraham had waited for God and Ishmael wasn't born. How different history would have been; how different would life for the Israelites be now? Abraham made his mistake; he and all his descendants have been paying for it ever since. He didn't solve his problem by going ahead of God, but he aggravated the problem and the effects are still being felt four thousand years later, and the problem is more acute now than it was then. It is the descendants of Ishmael who are the unrelenting, violent enemies of the State of Israel and of the descendants of the promised Seed, Isaac and Jacob. If ever history has a lesson for us to heed, it is this one. It is better to wait for God because impatience can have a terrible result. We need to realise we can't help God out by trying to solve our problems our own way. We need to wait for God and realise He is more than capable of doing what He has promised. By trying to help, we only mess things up.

In spite of his mistake, Abraham is both our Spiritual father in the faith, and our pattern to follow. His experiences are very important for us. Paul points that out in Romans chapter 4, then in verse 16 & 17, Paul writes that Abraham is the father of us all; the father of many nations. His faith was attributed to him as righteousness. The same applies to us. As Abraham is the father of all believers, so we must walk in the same footsteps of faith. One of Abraham's greatest tests was waiting for God to fulfil his promise of a son and heir. God told Abraham that he would have an heir and through that heir, all other nations would be blessed. His descendants would be multiplied and would be as numerous as the stars in heaven and as sand on the sea shores. Everything in Abraham's life depended on the fulfilment of that promise but he had to wait for God's timing.

Abraham eventually learned his lesson and Isaac was born 14 years after Ishmael; but it took a full 25 years before God fulfilled His promise to Abraham regarding Isaac. There was a supernatural transformation in Abraham and Sarah's bodies; God restored their ability to have a child so Isaac could be born; which was the outcome of waiting for God (Genesis chapters 17 & 18). God's promises are sometimes like seeds. The faith for fulfilment, needs time to take root and grow into the promised result. During that period of waiting time, we are waiting for God. Waiting for God is a necessary and logical requirement, for us to receive God's supernatural ability that will produce the result we require. Nothing is impossible for God and we read in Luke chapter 1, how the same supernatural transformation happened

with Elizabeth and Zachariah, and they went on to have John the Baptist in their latter years. Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength.

A greater test for Abraham would have been God's request that Abraham kill Isaac. By that time, Abraham had learned to trust God enough to carry out the task, but before Abraham had a chance to slay Isaac, God stopped him (Genesis 22:1 to 18). That kind of faith, trust and belief in God's promises, is just the same as we need in order for God to give us the supernatural strength.

Psalm 31:15; 'My times are in Your hands'. God has complete control of the time element of our lives and when we take that into our hearts, there is a release of tension and pressure. The Bible teaches, there is a correct time for every activity. Turn to Ecclesiastes 3:1 to 8. There we read there is a season and a time for every matter or purpose under heaven. Every matter mentioned in those verses, tell us there is a right time for everything to happen. As humans, we often try to do the right thing at the wrong time. We often concern ourselves about what is right but have no concern for the correct time. We have to learn to wait for God's time which brings us into harmony with God. God invites us to walk with Him and Amos 3:3 says; 'Do two walk together except they have agreed?' So we see that walking with God means walking in step with Him; harmonising with Him; walking in time with Him as we would to music and agreeing with Him.

The second form of waiting for God, is waiting for the right time for Jesus' return. Galatians 4:4 says; 'When the proper time had fully come, God sent His Son ...' There was a precise moment in time that was right for Jesus to come and there is a precise time that will be correct for the return of Jesus.

Ephesians 1:9 & 10 says this; 'Making known to us the mystery; the secret of His will, His purpose, in accordance with His good pleasure, and His merciful intention, which He had previously purposed and set forth in Jesus. He planned for the maturity of the times and the climax of the ages to unify all things, and head them up and consummate them in Christ, both things in heaven and things on the earth'.

Everything in the universe, on earth and in the heavens will be under one head – Jesus Christ. Just as we hear in an orchestra, all the musical instruments coming together to bring about the crescendo – so it will be at the end of this age when the times have reached their fulfilment; then Christ will be King over all the universe, and we will take our place with Him in the Kingdom. We have to think of ourselves as a kind of musical instrument – waiting for the Lord's direction to play our part and be in time and in harmony with God's purposes. To get this 'tune' right in our part of God's plan, we have to wait on God for His will to be played out. The rhythm and timing is from God.

Waiting is a distinctive mark of God's people on earth. That is what distinguishes God's true people from others. In 1 Thessalonians 1:9b & 10, Paul praises the Thessalonian people for serving God and for waiting for Jesus. 'You turned from your idols to serve a God Who is alive and true and you await the coming of His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead – Jesus, Who personally rescues us from the wrath which is coming, and He draws us to Himself'.

We can see that serving God is a mark of God's people, but what about waiting for God? That is put side by side with serving. It is far easier for us as Christians to learn to serve than it is to learn to wait. Learning to wait is an essential part of our life's discipline. Waiting has been a mark of God's true people for more than two thousand years. We have been waiting for Jesus for that long, and we will have to continue to wait until the time is right. Waiting carries certain important implications. We are to think and act differently from people in the world. Waiting for Jesus' appearing, should set Christians apart. Titus 2:11 to 13; 'For the grace of God has come for the deliverance from sin and the eternal salvation for all mankind. It (grace) has trained us to reject all ungodliness and worldly desires to live discreet, self-controlled, upright, devout lives in this present world. Awaiting the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus, the Messiah, the Anointed One'.

A popular Orthodox Jewish saying that has been held for hundreds of years is this: I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah and though He tarry, I will wait for Him every day. That has kept the Jewish people separate from all other people. It has marked them out. They are a waiting people. They are waiting for a Messiah. The exciting thing is; we are waiting for the same Messiah.

We as Christians are also a waiting people. We have a future that distinguishes us from most of the people on earth today. Waiting for Jesus, causes us to lead a certain kind of life; a life that is self-controlled, upright and Godly. It is motivated by the fact that we are waiting for Jesus' return. Hebrews 9:27 & 28 says; 'Just as it is appointed for all men (people) once to die and after that the judgement. Even so it is that Christ, having been offered to take upon Himself and bear as a burden the sins of many, once and once for all, will appear a second time, not to carry any burden of sin, but to bring to full salvation those who are eagerly and patiently waiting for Him'.

Notice that Jesus is coming to bring full salvation to those who are waiting for Him. That is one essential requirement of God's people on earth today – we are waiting for Him. It will be our final test of waiting. Then everything will come to the God-appointed climax of the age. Jesus warns us to be ready and waiting. Matthew 24:25; "See I have warned you beforehand."

Jesus will reject some people because they have been unfaithful while they were waiting for Jesus. Four parables tell us this; Matthew 24:48 & 49; The unfaithful servant who was put in charge of his Master's household, began to eat and drink with the drunken and beat his fellow servants; the unfaithful servant was rejected. Matthew 25:1 to 12 tells us about the five wise and five foolish virgins. The five foolish allowed their oil to run dry and they fell asleep. That indicates they stopped 'filling' themselves with the Holy Spirit and became complacent in their walk with the Lord; the five foolish virgins were rejected. Matthew 25:14 to 30 tells us the story of two men who used their talents for their Master, but a third man who buried his talent was rejected. Matthew 25:33 to 46 tells us we need to welcome and help the poor and destitute because if we refuse, then we too will be rejected. In the first three parables, they say the Master took a long time. Those people didn't stand the test of time. It is the final test for Christians and Jews alike. There will be a transformation for those who wait patiently for the Lord's return. Philippians 3:20 & 21 tells us; 'We are citizens of the state (commonwealth, homeland) which is in heaven, and from it also, we earnestly and patiently await the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform anew our lowly bodies to be like the body of His glory and majesty, by exerting that power which enables Him even to subject everything to Himself'.

We are eagerly awaiting the Lord's return and when He comes, there will be a glorious transformation of our physical bodies, so they will become like His glorious body. There is that principle again; waiting for God will bring about the supernatural transformation.

Amen and God bless you.

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