

The Practice of Waiting

(Romans 8:18-25; Isaiah 40:31)

Yearly Theme: *“Patience is...”*

Series Title: *“The Practice of Patience”*

July 3rd, 2022

Something to think about:

Walking at the pace of GOD. What does it mean to *“Walk at the pace of GOD?”*

What it means is that we cannot lead GOD, but must follow His lead.

I often run ahead of GOD (innocently enough). Instead of watching, listening, and following Him, I take off in a sprint in the direction I *think* He wants me to go, only to look back and see Him standing in the place where I previously was. In my “good intentions” I move and work trying to accomplish so much for GOD, but my good intentions are rarely GOD’s best intentions for me. I make decisions and start projects without spending time alone with GOD to see what He thinks about a thing before I act, only to find out that I should have waited instead.

But there’s something about waiting on the LORD that changes me for the better. When I wait on Him, my strength is renewed. When I wait on Him I have perspective and clarity of thought. When I wait upon the LORD, the decisions I make and the actions I take are rooted in wisdom and good judgment. And it’s in my waiting on Him that GOD pours His blessings and goodness over me in a way that I would all too often miss. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah understood and knew this well. Let’s take a look at one of the most famous verses of Scripture from the book bearing his name:

Isaiah 40:31 (ESV), ³¹ but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

A closer look at the Hebrew word translated in this verse as “wait,” can also be translated as “to hope for,” or “to trust.” Thus, another rendering of this verse can be: “Those who trust (put their hope) in the LORD will find new strength...” What’s interesting when the focus is put on waiting, or hoping, or trusting, is that all of these words point to the virtue of “patience.” More than a virtue, however, patience is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit living in a person. It is a fruit produced in the life of one who is focused on the LORD and surrendered to His will. Not only is patience a product of a life surrendered to GOD, but it is also a daily practice required in the believer’s life; it is a discipline to be lived out on purpose that does not come naturally. The Apostle Paul, in the New Testament letter to the Romans expresses the same sentiment. Writing during a time of persecution, Paul insists that our waiting is not in vain. Listen to what he writes:

Romans 8:18-25 (NLT),

¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. ¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.

²⁴ We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don’t need to hope for it. ²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don’t yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

Here’s the takeaway this morning:

Key Point: *“The practice of patience requires waiting on the LORD.”*

So, let’s take break down what waiting means in these two passages of Scripture today for a fuller understanding:

- **Waiting means trusting.**

John 10:1-5 (NLT), ¹ “I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! ² But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.”

- **Waiting means hoping.**

Galatians 5:5 (NLT), But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us.

Titus 2:11-13 (HCSB), ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared with salvation for all people, ¹² instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

- **Waiting means anticipating.**

Romans 8:22-23 (NLT), ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.

Something to take home:

In Augustine’s “Confessions,” he writes,

“Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You — man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that You resist the proud, — yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”¹

Is your heart restless this morning? Are you struggling to wait upon the LORD; are you struggling to trust Him with your life, or life’s circumstances? Are you willing to lean into Him? Are you willing to allow Him to lead you? Will you commit yourself to walking at the *pace of GOD*?

Key Point: *“The practice of patience requires waiting on the LORD.”*

¹ “Churchgoers Build Relationships, but Often without Discipleship.” Lifeway Research, October 1, 2021. <https://research.lifeway.com/2019/05/08/churchgoers-build-relationships-but-often-without-discipleship/>. (emphasis mine).