

Greater Grace in Waiting

By

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"Your Strength is to Sit Still"

Waiting naturally creates anxiety and excitement. You wished the waiting was over and *the expected good* made real. Yet waiting isn't all about emotional swings between fear of disappointment and exhilaration of the reality to come. Waiting on the Lord is a way of keeping hope and expectancy alive. It's a way of saying, 'Lord, I look unto Thee, and my hope in Thee shall not be in vain'. I will receive from your hand what I am waiting on you to do; my expectation in you will be fulfilled. You are all my hope!

One of the sins of Israel for which God rebuked them severally and severely was their inability to wait on Him in time of adversity. And He said this was not only an act of rebellion but also their weakness and ruin. In Isaiah 30 the LORD bewailed Judah for seeking help from Egypt instead of waiting on Him for salvation. And their rebellion was all apparent. They had jettisoned God even in their thoughts; they didn't factor Him into their plans, much less make Him their Hope. There was a new 'saviour' on the scene; regional superpower Egypt was their new ally and covenant partner. But the living God said they just signed their death warrant:

Isa 30:1-7

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

² That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

³ Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.

⁴ For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.

⁵ They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

⁶ The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them.

⁷ For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

It was an exercise in self-destruction. They had had ruled God out and His role right from the onset and had gone ahead to make an alliance, not at His instance, but against the direction of His Spirit. They had added to their sin, compounded their transgression. The alliance with Egypt was not merely a bilateral agreement, but it fundamentally changed their identity from a people whose help was Yahweh to one whose help was in treaties with foreign nations. They were no longer identified with the Holy One of Israel as their source of hope and help.

Egypt was their new "covering", their shadow of protection (opp. Ps 91) and strength. And they made an enthusiastic show of it. They undertook official visits to Egypt, sent ambassadors and diplomats for negotiations and sent gifts and treasures to the Egyptians, braving the wild animals in the Negev ("the south") as they journeyed to Egypt. But God said all was much ado about nothing! Their overtures to Egypt would only result in shame and confusion! They would gain no profit. The Egyptians would appear to be offering them some "help", or at least go through the motions of it, but all would be in vain.

But just consider all the trouble the people of Judah subjected themselves to just to secure help from Egypt! They dispatched diplomats and gifts but no help was forthcoming. Yet, all they needed to have done to find salvation and peace from God was to obey, trust and wait on Him. No treasures to give out, no deputations to dispatch. But the people simply thought they couldn't wait for God; they wanted help NOW! And if Egypt, their former oppressor, was the one to give it, so be it! Waiting was not part of their make-up. They wanted what they wanted now. God can save His lecture on righteousness and all that for now!

Isn't it such spirit of rebellion and impatience that drive supposed believers to fetish priests and medicine men because their way is supposedly faster? God's way is long and tortuous, and one will need tons of patience to wait for Him! Worst of all, He puts His will before our own (Ps 37:4), further delaying our wants. So to "Egypt", the world of Satan, our former slave master, we go. It's our short cut to the breakthrough we seek. God keenly takes note and records it as a rebellion awaiting judgment:

Isa 30:8-15

⁸ Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever:

⁹ That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD:

¹⁰ Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:

¹¹ Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

¹² Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon:

¹³ Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

¹⁴ And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.

¹⁵ For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.

Coddle us, pamper us; tell us what we want to hear. We won't have any "Thus saith the Lord" dressing down any longer. Enough of the moralizing and endless pontificating. Enough! "Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits".

But the LORD warned that this rebellious, dismissive attitude of theirs was a disaster waiting to happen; this attitude of waving aside His law and instructions would bring on sudden destruction, and it would be devastating.

Their true strength and wellbeing, the Lord ruefully declared, was for them to repent ('return') and to wait patiently for His salvation in a spirit of total trust and calmness. Sadly, "they would not!"

Waiting does not come naturally to the carnal man. To the extent that it entails patience, an element of "the fruit of Spirit" (Gal. 5:22), waiting is a spiritual virtue. It is a mark of spiritual maturity. It shows that a person knows and believes God enough to wait for Him because he knows Him to be faithful.

Triumph in Waiting

David, the King, the man after God's own heart, was a veteran when it came to waiting on God, and he did not once regret it. He lauded it in song:

I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

² He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

³ And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

⁴ Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

⁵ Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. (Ps 40:1-5).

The Psalm is not mere spiritual entertainment; it's the praise song of a faithful servant of the faithful God. He was in a real mess, but his patient and calm reliance on God brought him undreamt-of victory.

He was not on a bed of roses while he "waited patiently for the LORD". David was in pain; he was in trouble ('pit') and he was sinking fast and uncontrollably in the quicksand ('miry clay). Yet he was not seized by fear; he wouldn't be stampeded into seeking any short cuts to the exclusion of God.

David waited on his God by 'crying' out to Him. He gave vent to his sorrow and crushed spirit by unburdening himself to the Lord. He took it to the Lord in prayer.

Beloved, you may feel that you have hit the wall; you have come to the end of the tether. It's not make-believe, it's for real. But to wallow in self-pity and despair will not be of any help to you. And don't panic either. You are not without a defender. Take your burden to the Lord in prayer; cry your heart out to Him. He is the only Stone of help (1 Sam. 7:12). He will definitely intervene and in doing so better your situation and your life.

So, how did the Lord respond to the prayer of King David?

He rescued him from his deplorable situation but in rescuing him the Lord did not just restore him to his former situation. He bettered his life--He brought solidity and stability (sure-footedness) to his life. He set his feet on a "rock", a sure foundation, instead of a "pit" and "established his goings", thus obviating once and for all any possibility of tripping! He gave him secure footing which would ensure he reached his God-ordained destination.

If you fell at first, fear no fall again. Your God has given you sure-footedness because you waited patiently for Him. It is He who holds you by the right hand saying, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God [Elohim, your Mighty One]: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (Isa. 41:10).

His promise is sacred. His miraculous deliverance and promotion wholly vindicated David's calm and patient reliance on Him. And the praise is spontaneous! "He has put a new song in my mouth".

One of these days, God is going to 'blow your mind' with a miracle of deliverance so stupendous you cannot help but burst into praise. The song will be a gut reaction, a spontaneous outburst of praise because God has been good to you beyond all expectation! He will literally put a new song in your mouth. Your lips will give vent to the gratitude of your joyful soul, and many observers will notice it. But not just the song. They will also notice the glow in your countenance and mien and the positive change in your circumstances. Your transformed life will win converts for God.

Yah expects us to praise Him in return for His deliverance (Ps 116:11-14). That's all the 'payment' He demands from us (Ps 50:15). In addition, make it a habit of telling others about the wonderful things He has done for you. Spread the glory of His name. In "the great

congregation", testify to His faithfulness and mercy (Ps 40:9-10). He deserves all praise and honour.

The man who 'waits' on God in time of trouble shows by his action that he has made the Lord his trust which entails repudiating the proud and lies. Such a man is "blessed". He's "blessed" in that the wonderful works God performs in his life are innumerable (vv. 4-5).

Divine miracles come to define your life because you are immersed in the will of God, including patient reliance on Him in time of trouble. You are like the servant who, in accordance with Eastern custom, is wholly devoted to the will of his master and thereby enjoys his protection and generosity:

Ps 123:1-2

Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

² Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us.

The hand of the master or mistress signals his or her wish, and because the servant is a slave to his master's will, he intently observes it to perform its every command. But it's the same hand that also provides for the servant and offers him protection. Thus the servant looks to the hand of his master for both signals of his will and benevolence.

So it means to wait on the LORD. We must look to His directing hand to guide us in His will, to His protecting and correcting hand to keep us safe and on track and to His supplying hand to supply our needs (Ps 104:28; Phil. 4:19). Waiting on Him is not for the solitary objective of receiving from Him. It's to be dedicated to His will and to be filled with faith in His goodness. It's to 'commit your way to Him', to 'trust Him', and to rest in Him by patiently waiting for Him with the insouciance of a child (Ps 37). It's a walk of life with God, a life of obedience and dependence on Him. And the outcome can only be positive: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (Lam. 3:26).

Waiting does not mean Late

If you are a restless soul, it's time to calm down. Your peers are ahead of you in life; their businesses are thriving; some are married and have raised nice families. But here you are seemingly stuck in a rut! Life has not been fair to you, so you are embittered and sour. It's understandable to feel so, but don't resign yourself to it. Your present situation is only a learning process; it's not God's will for your life. As long as you trust in God, you shall not fall by the wayside; you shall not be the tail. God will make you the head at His own pace and time, whereupon you will come to appreciate Him better.

Life is not a competition; it's not a rat race. You were not born necessarily to compete with others in life. Neither are you an accident. You were born to fulfill a particular purpose for God on earth. Wait on Him and that purpose will be fulfilled in toto.

We wait for Him not to be left behind, but to out-sprint and to out-fly! He does not delay us; He gives us heavenly strength to outshine:

Isa 40:27-31

²⁷ Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

²⁸ Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.

²⁹ He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

³¹ But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

You were not late; you were not left behind. So why complain, 'God does not care about my plight; He has disregarded my right and denied me justice'. The question of ability on the part of God does not arise; it does not come in at all. He's "the Creator of the ends of the earth". He is not limited in any way--by space or time or might. And His wisdom is boundless and fathomless.

But you are tired. You have used up your energy to the last atom, and you are on the point of death. This has allowed others using their personal reserves of energy to run past you. However, it's God's unfathomable wisdom at work. He had you drained of all energy to prove a point: Those who rely on their own strength ("the youth and the young men") "shall utterly fall", but those who wait upon the LORD will receive a heavenly blast of divine energy! "They shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint".

You shall outpace them all with the speed and stamina of an eagle in full flight over hundreds of miles non-stop!

Who says, you are late? If you patiently wait for the Lord, He will make you overtake those who seem to be ahead of you today. He will speed your progress and your success. He will turn your life around by His limitless miracle power. The greats of today will bow to you in the not too distant future. Those who wait for Him will never see shame:

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me (Isa. 49:23).

He's the LORD, YAHWEH, The I AM WHO I WILL BE. Waiting for Him is worth every bit of it. He delights to bless those who wait for Him in a special way. It's my earnest prayer that you are one of them. Amen!