

We are continuing our series in the spiritual disciplines. Several weeks ago we went over the discipline of prayer. I mentioned Andrew Murray and the devotional, *Waiting on God*. This week and next I'll be sharing with you what I gleaned from that devotional. You'll recall that I added to the ACTS acronym and extra S for silence. This is the essence of waiting on God. It is to be still before Him, not only at special times of prayer, but also a continual attitude of the heart as we go throughout our day. For these two weeks we'll look at the numerous Scriptures that speak of the various aspects of waiting upon God and consider the necessity of this discipline.

The Psalmist wrote, ¹ *For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.* Psalm 62:1 (ESV) Because our salvation is entirely a work of God (Ephesians 2:8-9), it is necessary that we should quietly look to Him to perform that work in us. Everything that keeps us back from experiencing our salvation is due to our lack of waiting on Him to do that work in us. All that we can do to see our soul restored from the Fall and for the life of Christ to be manifest in us is to return to absolute and unceasing dependence on God. From the beginning of creation man was meant to find the fountain of life, fullness of joy, meaning, and purpose in God. He was always meant to wait on God as God always intended to supply our every need. *"Man was to have the joy of receiving every moment out of the fullness of God. This was his blessedness as an unfallen creature."*

After the Fall we were just as absolutely dependent upon God, but our sinful nature causes us to look to ourselves as a god. (Genesis 3:5) Even when we are saved we have no power to change our life but that which we receive from God. Our daily and ultimate salvation comes from the God upon whom we wait with expectancy. It is the believers' lack of realizing how dependent we are *or* our inexperience of the joy and peace to be found that keep us from this heart attitude of waiting on God. Once we begin to experience it, receiving from God moment by moment, we find it to be the joy and blessing of each day. Our thinking about God is transformed as we see Him as the God who delights in meeting our need and enjoys our looking to Him.

We wait on God for our salvation, and then find that our salvation introduces us to the glory of constantly waiting upon Him for the fullness of our salvation. Waiting on Him is experiencing Him as our all, and recognizing Him as *the* All in all. (1Corinthians 15:28)

In the middle of Jacob's blessing for his sons he prayed, ¹⁸ *I wait for your salvation, O LORD.* Genesis 49:18 (ESV) It seems so out of place there, but it really expresses his heart of utter dependence on the LORD, seeking God as the One that fulfills His word. God does not dole out gifts like grace and goodness and strength as something He can part with. It is Himself that He personally and unceasingly gives. His salvation is His own

Commented [notes1]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Commented [notes2]: Genesis 3:5 (ESV)

⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Commented [notes3]: 1 Corinthians 15:28 (ESV)

²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

presence. The only reason we do not receive His character to a greater extent is that we do not *let* Him. Our apathy and self-effort hinders us from His fullness. When He instructs us to wait on Him, **He is asking for our surrender, obedience, desire, and trust.** It is for us to acknowledge our depravity and His all-sufficiency to meet our every need. When our eyes are opened to see that there is no good but that which He works in us and in others, we will wait on Him humbly and stillness and then watch to see Him at work.

²⁶ *It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.* Lamentations 3:26 (ESV) We are so influenced by the world around us that we must do as Jesus did and find that place of solitude to quietly wait upon God to hear what He would speak to our hearts. (Mark 1:35) It takes a great effort to still the thoughts and keep out of our minds all the worldly concerns and fears and just listen for the still small voice. (1 Kings 19:12) The Scriptures repeatedly tell us that the presence of the Lord should quiet our soul before Him. ²⁰ *But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.* Habakkuk 2:20 (ESV) ⁷ *Be silent before the Lord GOD!* Zephaniah 1:7a (ESV) ¹³ *Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.* Zechariah 2:13 (ESV)

If we see waiting on God in quietness as a method to get what we are asking in prayer, our spirit will never be still. But when we see quietness as the blessing of coming before our holy God who loves us and wants our fellowship, then our awe of Him in His glory will humble our spirit into a quietness that invites Him to speak to us.

Take time away from the busyness of the world and all your self energy as well. The Word and prayer are essential, but don't let these keep you so busy that you do not still your soul before the Lord. If you will make this one of your disciplines you will grow to highly value the time. It is a time of letting God be God. You have already laid your petitions before Him in prayer. **Your stillness says you trust Him to answer in His way and His time.** Your openness to His Spirit says that He can correct your petitions or redirect what you have asked because you wait on Him as His servant. (Psalm 123:2)

When Isaiah prophesied about the days of the Messiah he wrote, ⁹ *It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."* Isaiah 25:9 (ESV) Just as the people in Jesus' day could be glad and rejoice that the answer to their waiting upon God was fulfilled in Jesus, so we too can be wait upon God as a community of believers for His saving work in our nation, our community, and in our church. I can tell you that this is what the Pastors' Prayer Group learned. We tried various kinds of outreaches, good ideas, but saw they were powerless unless they were inspired by God. All kinds of ministries and para-church organizations have come and gone with very little

Commented [notes4]: Mark 1:35 (ESV)

³⁵ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

Commented [notes5]: 1 Kings 19:12 (ESV)

¹² And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.

Commented [notes6]: Psalm 123:2 (ESV)

² Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he has mercy upon us.

change. We determined that we would wait on God for His salvation. We recognize our inability to come up with anything helpful on our own. God must bring His salvation as we wait on Him. When we humbly realize our helplessness, we become completely dependent on Him. He must have the place of honor and power. We know that as we wait on Him, in His time, He will reveal His power to save.

This is why your elders gather to seek God's heart. Many churches put their heads together and come up with mission or purpose to engage the church. We wait on the Lord for His plan. Some people hear it as an excuse when we say, "We are waiting on the Lord." That is the only godly answer unless God has already divinely revealed His will. We have seen that personal mentoring, making disciples, is the direction He has led. But that does not mean we are not continuing to wait on Him. As a church body we should be waiting on the Lord for the outreach of the church. As we review the year today in the meeting that follows, everything should be the result of having waited on the Lord. No individual receives any glory. We can merely thank them for waiting on the Lord and letting Him work in and through them. (Philippians 2:13)

The Scriptures give us a number of wonderful promises to those who wait upon the Lord. Consider the greatness of these promises. *⁷ But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.* Micah 7:7 (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.* Isaiah 40:31 (ESV) *...those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.* Isaiah 49:23 (ESV) With promises like these, who would not want find the blessing of waiting on God? He will hear us. We will renew our strength. We will not be put to shame!

The desire of our heart as we wait on Him is to adore Him. But it is there in His presence that our petitions align with His heart and our main request is to be conformed to the likeness of His Son. (Romans 8:29) It's to have Christ be formed within us (Galatians 4:19), to abide in Him and let our lives be filled with His presence inwardly and outwardly. (John 15:4) We should approach our special time of waiting with joyful expectancy because *my God will hear me.*

When our strength is gone and we don't feel we can go on, the source of strength and renewal is there for us in the quiet place of waiting upon God. If you know that passage you know that in the verse before it, God says that he does not tire or grow weary. (Isaiah 40:28) What God is promising is to give Himself to us. His presence is our source of strength. He is the renewal within us as we quietly wait on Him. The Psalmist repeated this theme in Psalm 27. *¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!* Psalm 27:14 (ESV) God will act. Just wait with expectant faith. Don't let the situations get you down! You are trusting in the all-powerful One that does the

Commented [notes7]: Philippians 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Commented [notes8]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Commented [notes9]: Galatians 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

Commented [notes10]: John 15:4 (ESV)

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

Commented [notes11]: Isaiah 40:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

perfect thing in the perfect time. Let your heart take courage.⁷ *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!* Psalm 37:7 (ESV) In quietness and confidence will your strength be! (Isaiah 32:17)

The person that waits on the Lord does not run around sharing his woes with everyone that will listen. They confidently wait on God. They don't put their hope in the opinions of man or in his or her suggestions or experience. They look to the God who sees all and knows all. They commit it to Him and wait for Him to act in His perfect time. This is where we learn to patiently exercise our faith by trusting in God.

I think we all struggle with this because we all want God to act immediately after we pray. Our **waiting upon God shows we believe God knows better than we do and that we trust and believe in Him with our whole heart.** Doubt and fear are always looking for alternatives to make things happen on our own. That is a demonstration of a lack of trust. In that quiet waiting upon God, His presence calms our fears, silences our troubled thoughts, and reminds us of His greatness and faithfulness in the past. It is then that we experience the peace of God that passes understanding. (Philippians 4:6-7)

²⁷ *These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.* ²⁸ *When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.* Psalm 104:27-28 (ESV) Every living thing waits on God for His goodness. We are amazed at the circle of life and the chain of dependency, but few give credit to God for making it so. All of nature teaches what we as prideful man have such a hard time accepting. Goodness comes from the hand of God. We must wait on Him to receive it. (Psalm 145:15-16)

¹ *I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.* ³ *He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.* Psalm 40:1,3 (ESV) When Hagar fled from Sarai, the Angel of the LORD told her to name her son Ishmael, God hears. (Genesis 16:11) He hears us in our difficulties but we must have that patience to wait for Him to express His goodness in His time. Patience comes from the Latin word for suffering. Early in our Christian walk we make the effort to be patient because we are supposed to do so. We'd really rather God acted right now. We feel we have no other choice so we must be patient. Experience teaches us it is the wisest choice and so we regretfully submit. As we mature, we find that waiting on God in patience is not just wise, but it is even joyful. We can trust in the One that is good and will act according to His love for us. We learn from our lack of patience and the consequences that result that we can trust God to do a much better job than we could imagine. **Godly patience is to lose our self-will in God's perfect will.** The humility that knows God knows best, the meekness that lets him have His way, and the

Commented [notes12]: Isaiah 32:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.

Commented [notes13]: Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Commented [notes14]: ¹⁵ *The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.* ¹⁶ *You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

Commented [notes15]: Genesis 16:11 (ESV)

¹¹ And the angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction.

desire to be completely surrendered to Him for His glory does not come overnight. We grow in these graces as we wait upon the Lord and experience the wonder of Him doing greater things than we could ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)

⁷ *"And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you. ⁸ Deliver me from all my transgressions.* Psalm 39:7-8a (ESV) Sometimes we don't know just what it is we are waiting for, or how we expect God to act. But we do know our hope of the future is in God. Sometimes our expectations are limited by our past experiences or what we can imagine as possible. Murray tell us, *"In every true prayer there are two hearts in exercise. The one is your heart, with its little, dark, human thoughts of what you need and God can do. The other is God's great heart, with its infinite, its divine purposes of blessing."* Then he asks which heart we should look to as we wait on God?

Waiting upon God is the school in which we learn that God is the Master Craftsman, molding us and doing through us greater things than we could ever imagine. If you could see the final product He is making of you, your little earthly ego would get way too big. It is His grace that does not reveal it to us now. As you wait, yield yourself to the Craftsman's hands in trust and expectation. (Isaiah 64:8)

⁵ *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. ⁶ He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.* Psalm 62:5-6 (ESV) Is your confidence in anything else? It will disappoint you. God alone has the ability and the desire to transform you and redeem you from the Fall. Some trust in the church, in sacred duties, in the programs of man, but they will all fall short. Even God ordained things like the bronze serpent (2Kings 18:4), the Ark of the Covenant (1Samuel 4:4), and the Temple (2Kings 21:7) were turned into idols upon which men placed their hope. God alone is our rock.

"You are an immortal spirit, created not for this world but for eternity and for God. Oh, dear soul, realize your destiny. Know your privilege, and 'wait... only upon God.'" Even these disciplines that I am sharing with you can become idols that take God's place in your life. They are only helpful as you employ them by the Spirit as you draw near to a personal and loving God. Remember that God is for you and you were created for God. Let Him be your exceeding joy, the satisfaction of your soul. Never forget that you are absolutely helpless without Him and that He is your absolute sufficiency. ¹ *For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.* Psalm 62:1 (ESV)

Commented [notes16]: Ephesians 3:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

Commented [notes17]: Isaiah 64:8 (ESV)

⁸ But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Commented [notes18]: 2 Kings 18:4 (ESV)

⁴ He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).

Commented [notes19]: 1 Samuel 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

Commented [notes20]: 2 Kings 21:7 (ESV)

⁷ And the carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever.

Question

1 What is needed to be more Christlike?

- 2 How did God intend for man to relate to Him?
- 3 What keeps us from waiting on God?
- 4 What does waiting imply?
- 5 What stills our heart?
- 6 What is corporate waiting?
- 7 What are the promises for waiting on God?
- 8 In what attitude do we wait?
- 9 What does our waiting declare?
- 10 Go over the process of growing in patience.
- 11 What are the two hearts in prayer?