

Waiting on God: Fundamental to our Faith

Texts: Isa. 40:28-31; Rom. 8:23-25

Edited and posted by Bob Young

Introduction

In his book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go*, Dr. Seuss describes a familiar location: the Waiting Place. We've all been there. Perhaps some of you are there right now. It's the place where people are *just* waiting.

Waiting for a train to go

or a bus to come, or a plane to go

or the mail to come, or the rain to go

or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow

or waiting around for a Yes or No

or waiting for their hair to grow.

Everyone is just waiting.

Waiting for the fish to bite

or waiting for the wind to fly a kite

or waiting around for Friday night

or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake

or a pot to boil, or a Better Break

or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants

or a wig with curls, or Another Chance.

Everyone is just waiting.

Dr. Seuss warns us that the Waiting Place is not a place to linger. If you stay there too long, life may just pass you by. That is true. And yet, spiritual maturity is all about waiting. We are supposed to be waiting, though hopefully not *just* waiting. The spiritual question is: What is the quality of our waiting? What are we waiting for? Will we be ready to receive it when it arrives? Waiting is a profoundly spiritual matter. Much of our daily life is spent waiting: waiting in line at the grocery store or the post office (especially this time of year), waiting for a live human voice on the other end of the phone while following an endless series of menu options at the customer service center, sitting in the waiting room at the doctor's office, waiting in traffic, waiting for a long, boring sermon to end!

No one likes to wait.

Being forced to wait often leads to ungodly responses.

How good are you at waiting?

While the things I've mentioned are fairly casual kinds of waiting . . . and we simply put up with them ... there are other, more serious and difficult kinds of waiting: the waiting of a single person to see if God has marriage in store for him or her; the waiting of a childless couple who desperately wants to start a family, but day after day, week after week, their prayer goes unanswered; the waiting of someone who longs to have work that is meaningful and significant and seems to matter; the waiting of a spouse that's trapped in a hurting marriage that seems unable to change.

The most important kind of waiting is learning to wait on the Lord. We wait and we wait. Forty-three times in the Old Testament God's people are commanded to "wait on the Lord."

1. Waiting on the Lord is an act of obedience.

Sometimes God commands us to wait upon him. Think of Bible stories where God told his people to wait: Abraham, Israelites, Simeon, Anna, the disciples.

Waiting is not irresponsible, is sometimes required.

The obvious question is why? Why does God make us wait? If he can do anything and if he is all-loving, why does he not bring us relief and answers now?

What God does in us while we wait is as important as what it is we're waiting for.

Paul says while we are waiting for God to set everything right, we suffer.

Romans 5:3-4. God is producing these qualities in us while we wait. What that means is that biblically, waiting is not just something we have to do until we get what we want. Waiting is part of the process of **becoming** what God wants us to be. In this sense, waiting is active, not passive.

2. Waiting on the Lord is an evidence of a trusting heart.

Waiting requires patience. Will I trust that God has good reasons for telling me to wait? Will I trust God for what I do not know more than what I do know? Will I trust that God knows what he is doing? Will I remember that things look different to God because He views things from **eternity** . . . He sees the whole picture of my life. God has a different perspective.

2 Peter 3:8-9 (NIV)

Consider the faith of the trapeze artist who must hang in midair, waiting for his partner to catch him.

Or, you may have heard of the economist who thought he had discovered a loophole in Scripture to make him rich, only to discover that God used the same loophole to teach patience.

An economist read this passage and was quite amazed by it and talked to God about it. "Lord, is it true that a thousand years for us is just like one minute to you?"

The Lord said, "Yes."

The economist said, "Well then, a million dollars to us must be like one penny to you."

The Lord said, "Well, yes."

The economist said, "Well, Lord, will you give me one of those pennies?"

The Lord said, "Sure. No problem. Wait here just a minute."

Often we want God's resources, but not His timing. We want His hand, but not His calendar. We forget that His work within us while we wait is as important as what it is we are waiting for. Waiting means I must trust that God knows what He's doing.

3. Waiting requires confident humility.

Isaiah 32:17. The result of righteousness is two character qualities: (1) confidence, conviction that God is able, (2) quietness.

These qualities are the opposite of arrogance and boasting. It is an act of humility to recognize your limits...that you cannot do it all...and that you cannot do it best! Waiting is something by its nature that only the humble can do with grace.

To wait for something is to recognize I am not in control...I am not calling the shots, the timing is not up to me. In our society, there's a direct correlation between status and waiting. The higher your status, the less you have to wait. Waiting on God reminds me I'm not in charge . . . that I'm the creature.

But, we're not just waiting around; we're waiting on God. And God is doing something in us while we wait.

Therefore . . . we can trust God's wisdom . . . His timing . . . and we can wait with confidence. That is why the single most important activity for people waiting on God is prayer. Prayer is the primary form that waiting on God takes. It's prayer that allows us to humbly wait without worry. So we wait with confident humility because God is the One leading us . . . and we are not in charge.

4. Waiting on the Lord is an evidence of hope.

For in hope we were saved. Hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what is seen?

In other words, if I already have...I don't need to hope for it. But if we hope for what we do not yet see...what we cry out for and hunger and thirst for...but do not yet experience...through Christ we can do so with patience. When you think about it...waiting is the hardest work of hope.

In Isaiah we find a most wonderful promise attached to waiting on the Lord. **Isaiah 40:30-31 (NIV)**