

# Knowing the Benefits of waiting upon the Lord

By Jay Wegter

The benefits of waiting upon the Lord are manifold. But, this waiting in patient reliance upon the Lord runs headlong against our natural survival instincts. We tend to meet our lack of personal strength and adequacy with striving and stress. Waiting upon God is the answer to stress. God answers our anxiety with His own Person. When we wait upon God, we first of all *long for God*. Out of *longing for God* comes *listening to God*. Out of *listening to God* comes *living upon God*. He is the answer to our lack of strength: “Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary” (Is 40:31).

Living upon God is our role by design, it is our ‘creational calling’, but the evil one’s original lie in the Garden of Eden was an invitation to live independently of God. The devil offered an impossible dream of human autonomy that soon proved to be a nightmare. For, the attempt to live independently from God is both impossible and eternally destructive (Gen 2:17).

In God’s great love and compassion He reconciles believing sinners to Himself through Christ (2 Cor 5:18-21). Salvation includes the matchless gift of a new heart which takes delight in our Father’s Person, care, will, direction and love. And, as *waiting upon the Lord* becomes a lifestyle, numerous positive changes in our personal character take place. Consider the following aspects of transformation which occur in those who wait upon the Lord.

## Know the benefits of waiting upon the Lord

- Waiting upon the Lord *mortifies our demanding-ness*. Thus, it assists in putting to death our demand to have our own way, and on our time schedule.
- Waiting on the Lord *produces a greater trust in the Lord as Provider*.
- Waiting *makes us increasingly willing to practice positive resignation in the face of God’s providence*. Thus, waiting on God is the true test of our doctrine of God’s sovereignty.
- Waiting *protects us from the often disastrous consequences of impetuosity*.
- Waiting *leaves room for God to work*. Remember, from our limited perspective, God appears incredibly slow. Waiting upon Him ‘adjusts us to the timetable of His will’.
- Waiting *cultivates holy expectation*. As we walk in obedience, we learn to *expect* His blessing, and patiently look for it; this deepens our confidence that God is the source of every good gift: “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (Jas 1:17).
- Waiting *teaches us to receive from the Lord instead of taking for ourselves*. Our tendency to ‘grab’ dishonors the divine Giver. God gives to His own in an all-wise way that will keep their love to Him greater than their love for His gifts.

- Waiting *allows God to leave the mark of His hand upon the blessings He sends*. This glorifies God as the true Giver, and is the opposite of saying, “I made it happen.”
- Waiting *teaches us to please the Lord as our highest ambition*. “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him” (2 Cor 5:9).
- Waiting *liberates us from the fear of losing what is most precious to us*. This is true because waiting reinforces the fact that God is the ultimate Giver, and that He is for us, and knows best. “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things (Rom 8:31-32)?
- Waiting *orders our spiritual priorities by causing us to place delight in the Lord ahead of the temporal desires of our hearts*. “Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday” (Ps 37:4-6).

## **Waiting upon the Lord is indispensable to godliness**

*The Psalms speak continually of the posture of the godly man’s heart before the Lord. Waiting upon God is one of the most common attitudes of heart described in the Psalter.* It is the posture essential to meditation on the Word, prayer, and worship—therefore it is inseparable from heart religion. A. W. Pink rightly notes that,

When the eyes of our hearts are open to see something of God’s sovereign majesty, infinite dignity, superior glory, and we begin to rightly esteem Him, then we perceive how thoroughly right and just it is that such a One should be held in the utmost reverence, and esteemed far above all others, and exulted in: “Sing unto the Lord all the earth” (Ps 96:1). A spiritual sight and sense of the supreme excellency and infinite glory of the Triune Jehovah will not only rejoice our hearts to know that He is King of kings, Governor of all worlds, but we are also thankful and glad that we live under His government and are His subjects and servants (A. W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification*, p. 127).

Thus, to have this proper vision of God, we must still ourselves, removing all distractions, and cultivate waiting upon Him as we attend to His Word. As one traces the theme of *waiting upon God* through the Psalms, it becomes clear that waiting is indispensable to godliness. Waiting upon the Lord is nothing less than the godly man or woman letting God be God. The following Psalms give ample demonstration that waiting upon the Lord honors God and places the believer in the best possible position to know God, to do His will, to enjoy God, to receive from Him, and to glorify Him by trust.

## **There are numerous Psalms which enjoin waiting upon God**

**Ps 4:4-5** – “Tremble and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and trust in the Lord.” Waiting settles our spirit—it keeps us from rash and passionate reactions. It reminds us that God is in charge and that life goes around Him and not me. What a powerful defense against anger, impatience, and irritability!

**Ps 27:13-14** – *“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.”* Fear and despair are conquered by waiting upon the Lord. Expectation from God is a function of personal holiness. Isn't that interesting, those committed to personal holiness expect God to keep His promises. Waiting deepens our personal expectation that God's goodness will be poured out upon us. When we wait upon God, we become strong because our object of trust shifts from self to Almighty God. Fears evaporate because our confidence in God is tied to the following: He loves us too much to give us now what we are not yet ready to receive. His timing is perfect.

**Ps 33:18-22** – *“Behold the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy Name. Let Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee.”* Here the Psalmist places his trust solely in God and not in his own personal plans. The more we trust in God, the more it takes us off of self and allows us to rejoice in God. Verse 22 is the ‘clinch’, it teaches that God requires *holy expectation* from us. The Psalmist even equates the ongoing experience of God's lovingkindness to be a proportional function of *how much he has hoped in God*. Holy expectation in God is part of holy living. What a contrast this is to the man who hurriedly rushes off a prayer, *“God bless my plan, Amen.”*

**Ps 37:34** – *“Wait for the Lord and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.”* When our focus is waiting upon the Lord as our true source of every good gift, it will help keep us from unsanctified ambition. While waiting upon the Lord we must keep ourselves in a position to be blessed—by *“keeping His way”* (that is committing ourselves to obedience).

**Ps 52:9** – *“I will give Thee thanks forever, because Thou has done it, and I will wait on Thy Name, for it is good, in the presence of Thy godly ones.”* A lifestyle of waiting on God is joined to the power of our testimony. Those believers around us will see that we conduct our life by waiting upon God instead of impatiently prosecuting our own plans.

**Ps 57:1-3** – *“Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, for my soul takes refuge in Thee; and in the shadow of Thy wings I will take refuge, until destruction passes by. I will cry to God Most High, to God who accomplishes all things for me. He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches him who tramples upon me. God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.”* Holy expectation in God is the fruit of a conscience that trusts in God and stays pure before Him.

**Ps 62:1-2; 7-8** – *“My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken. On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.”* In verses one and two there is solitude and stability in waiting. In verses seven and eight there is hope, safety, and intimacy with God in waiting.

**Ps 130:5-6** – *“I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than the watchmen for the morning; indeed more than the watchmen for the morning.”* Waiting deepens our practical reliance upon the Word of God. Waiting proves that we regard God as trustworthy. Waiting makes us alert and sensitive as to when God is speaking to us and directing us.

**Ps 147:10-11** – *“He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness.”* How clear this passage is. God desires that we keep our hearts in a posture of waiting and utter dependence

upon Him. He makes His favor known to the man who waits expectantly upon Him. God delights in the man who waits and trusts. God crowns the man who waits upon Him with nobility.

## **Waiting upon God is opposed by obstacles we must overcome**

The Word of God is utterly realistic concerning human experience with its pain and suffering. When relief seems perpetually out of reach, it can be distressing and discouraging. It says in Proverbs, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life” (Prov 13:12). Amidst our difficulties, the most common way we demonstrate weakness in our trust is to doubt that God has made our problem a priority. In my heart, I am tempted to charge Him with forgetting about me, as if my Heavenly Father were practicing child neglect. When our distress is acute, and relief seems distant, we are tempted to doubt His care.

But, Isaiah shows us the caring heart of God. “But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.’ ‘Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you” (Is 49:14-15). This tender passage is a corrective. From my puny perspective, this dishonoring of God’s character through doubt and murmuring proves to be a carnal attempt to cope with the negatives in my life. The solution is to wait upon God. But, this is a different kind of waiting than staring at your watch and just gutting it out. It is not like waiting for a late train. Waiting on God involves a reverential recounting of His majesty. And, as with the habit of the Psalmist there ought also to be a recitation of His past faithfulness that accompanies the exaltation of His character and attributes.

“I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old” (Ps 77:11). His wisdom, loving kindness, perfections and excellence are revealed in His providential care. Therefore, waiting on God is a rich synonym for faith and reliance, for waiting upon Him is inseparable from relying upon all that God is toward me in Christ. Waiting on God humbles my carnal thoughts of doing things my way in the interest of my demands and my schemes. Professor Emeritus of Christian Education, Howard Hendricks of Dallas Theological Seminary offers the following insight related to waiting on God. “*After 40 years in ministry, I can without equivocation say that every major problem I brought on myself was due to getting ahead of God’s Spirit and not waiting upon the Lord.*”

## **Waiting on God is a spiritual discipline that is to be learned**

As those created in His image and appointed by God to subdue the earth, we like to *make things happen*. Our secret motto is: *if it’s going to be, it’s up to me*. There is much ‘unsanctified ambition’ remaining in us. Learning to wait upon the Lord is a spiritual discipline that must be cultivated and learned. For the world around us is preoccupied with *what shall we eat, what shall we wear, where shall we dwell* (Matt 6:31-32)?

***Waiting upon God is not the same as passivity, or letting go and doing nothing. We must therefore distinguish between passivity and waiting upon God.*** First of all, waiting on the Lord is not antithetical to initiative. Waiting is a posture of heart that says *God is the Giver; He does not need my striving to make things happen and fulfill His promise; I will trust in God and depend on Him more than upon my plans. By His Word, and His Spirit, and by wise counselors He is perfectly capable of making it clear what action I should take.*

***During God's apparent delays, it feels like His answers are late.*** Why does He make us wait? Why does He keep us waiting? There is actually unseen blessing taking place in our souls while we are consciously leveraged upon God. Waiting on Him is an ideal way for God to mortify our inveterate hunger for security through control. Waiting on God reaffirms in our minds who truly is in control. That is a reality we frequently need refreshed, but usually do not want. Our carnal formula goes like this, "I am most secure when I am exercising the highest level of control over my life." But, when God places us in a period of consciously waiting on Him, then we learn that true security is found in resignation to His all wise control. Preferring God's control over my own efforts to control can only be learned by waiting on God.

***We must take note that when we are in a long tunnel of trouble, there will be a strong level of temptation to stop trusting and to start scheming.*** In Isaiah 50 we see a graphic contrast between those who trust God amidst trouble (even when they cannot 'see' a solution), and those who descend into 'will worship' and idolatry. The contrast between them and their destinies cannot be greater. "Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with firebrands, walk in the light of your fire and among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand: you will lie down in torment" (Is 50:10-11). In this passage there is a powerful negative metaphor of attempting to walk in one's own light instead of God's light.

### **Through waiting on Him, God teaches us to practice 'holy expectation'**

Waiting upon the God of majesty is a powerful cure to our ***fear, uncertainty and doubt*** ('Elmer F.U.D.'). Note that pastors in previous generations often wrote in their journals that their parishioners tended to live in a state of fear, uncertainty, and doubt. Our proper alignment to His majesty by means of waiting on Him is crucial in our Christian walk. Waiting upon the God of majesty is the alignment, or posture that He requires of us. The polar opposite of waiting on God is living in a state of perpetual doubt and double-mindedness. James targets this sinful posture as follows: "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (Jas 1:5-8).

This is convicting isn't it. We sometimes seek to protect ourselves from disappointment by trusting less, hoping less, and expecting little. God is not honored when we project upon Him our fears of non-blessing, as if He were stingy, stodgy, and exasperating. Our Lord severely rebukes this absence of trust in Matthew chapter 25.

And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no *seed*. "And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours." "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no *seed*. 'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my *money* back with interest. 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' "For to everyone

who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. “Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 25:24-30).

***This should leave no doubt in our minds of how crucial it is that we think rightly about God.*** It also sheds a great deal of light upon why waiting upon God is such a vital grace or virtue. The abundant grace found in the gospel ought to remind us that God’s favor toward those in Christ is without limit. “For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us” (2 Cor 1:20). When we wait upon God, we are exalting His generosity, the greatness of His heart. And, therefore, this activity of waiting upon Him cultivates in us, ‘holy expectation’. Just as Joshua and Caleb in exercising holy expectation in God’s promises were able to see past the obstacles of the giants of Canaan and their fortified cities.

### **On the Last Day, God is going to publicly display the triumph of our faith**

Waiting upon the Lord keeps our faith nimble, agile, and strong. Untested faith is not approved faith. It is tested and approved faith that brings about Christian character and proven character brings about hope. Proven character and lively hope are the fruits of proven faith.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom 5:1-5).

Countless people claim to be Christians, but without the testing of their profession of faith, there can be no manifestation of what sort of faith it is. If we are ignorant about God’s intent to test our faith, we would easily fall into walking by sight and imagine that God was not for us when we experience severe tribulation and trial. But the trial of our faith is God’s plan. For by testing our faith He not only reveals our hearts deepest affections but also the object of our love and trust.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him (Jas 1:2-5).

The proof of the genuineness of our faith is proven by trials. God promises that this testing and suffering will result in glory, honor, and praise when the sons of God are revealed.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls (1 Pet 1:6-9).

Our problem is that we do not often think that our trials are producing something far more precious than mountains of gold. Our trials appear to be a nuisance but that is because we do not perceive that the possession of proven faith is the only wealth that will survive the grave (1 Pet 1:6-9). In our tribulations and affliction, do we deliberately connect these dots as the apostle James and Peter do in the first chapters of their epistles (Jas 1:2-5; 1 Pet 1:6-9)? Here are the dots, ***tribulation and testing result in endurance and proven character and proven faith and character result in hope.*** Proven faith will be presented as deserving of glory, honor, and praise. These are things which are worth far more than gold which is perishable.

Do you ever catch yourself being drawn into a performance dynamo that is spinning at high rpm's? My wife and I find ourselves living this way, we refer to it as becoming a 'human doing'—living a 'driven' lifestyle in which your joy dries up. During those seasons of phrenetic activity, waiting upon the Lord can seem counterproductive, even like an inferior way to redeem the time. But nothing could be further from the truth. We ought to be ready to repent of our hyperactivity, ridding ourselves of the common excuses for spiritual 'drift' such as busy-ness, repeated disappointment, and unfruitfulness.

Ask the Lord to grant you the willingness to release control to Him and the willingness to be abased by waiting humbly and patiently upon Him. Then, set your heart to seek His majesty afresh with the holy expectation that God delights in strengthening and refreshing His beloved people.

For thus says the high and exalted One  
Who lives forever, whose name is Holy,  
“I dwell *on* a high and holy place,  
And *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit  
In order to revive the spirit of the lowly  
And to revive the heart of the contrite (Is 57:15).