

WD September 15, 2024

“The Difference Between Waiting and Hope”

Waiting is no fun. Last week sat in my car getting ready to turn on to a busy road to come to church. The traffic was very thick and there was a driver in an big SUV ahead of me signaling a left turn. This road does not give up opening easily during morning rush hour so decent openings to turn left come after long waits. The driver in front of me, who was waiting to make a left hand turn, must have been sleep driving or playing with a phone, or maybe was too nervous to try it. Opening—no movement. Another opening—no movement. Ten stinking minutes—no attempts at all. I was wondering what kind of gap the driver was waiting for. Finally, thirteen minutes and twenty seconds in, the big SUV turned out leaving about five of us behind anxious to get going. It took me one minute to find an opening big enough.

Waiting is not a favorite to most people. Waiting in an ER...Oh who doesn't like sitting in a room full of coughing, snotty, sick people. I often say the reason we call patients in hospital's patients is because that's what we have to practice, namely, patience. Waiting for important test results or for the next meal, doesn't matter, waiting in the hospital is literally a drag. Perhaps the worst point of waiting in a hospital is when a doctor suggests that you might be going home today. In your mind, its time to get dressed and get out now. Not so fast cries another specialist. “Might need to do one more test.”

And who doesn't love to wait at the BMV? It's way better now than in my early driving days. Used to have to pack lunch when going. All the while I sit wondering if I had all the documentation needed for my stuff to get done. Waiting is not meant to be a time of worry and fear.

Here it is: At some point one has to leave the waiting room. At some point one has to make that left turn. At some point one has to make the decision for the procedure to be done or not to be done. Waiting can be helpful. Waiting can be crippling too. Waiting too long can build anxiety. Waiting just enough can build within us hope and anticipation. Waiting can give time for information to be weighed and considered. Waiting too long can become destructive. The difference is what is happening in the waiting. Waiting usually isn't empty especially when one is waiting on the Lord as Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD." The whole point of the wait is to go home or to the next thing. Waiting implies that something comes next which means that waiting is meant to be a transitory state, not a permanent place.

The word for wait here is *Qavah*, to wait, to hope, to expect. This is not a passive existence but a deliberate, proactive, and preparing for the next thing. For example, it is to trust in the Lord and love the Lord with all of your heart, mind, and soul. Waiting on the Lord is a conscience lifestyle that lives by the Word. It is propelled by hope in the resurrection. It is a hopeful, expectant waiting that anticipates eternal life as a certain thing.

Waiting renews our strength. Isaiah 40:31 says, "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." Think of waiting as rehab time. When one is in rehab the whole point while waiting to heal is to strengthen oneself in the waiting. It is about renewing one's strength after a sickness or a surgery. Even a soul needs some rehab from time to time especially after losing a loved one—one needs a time to mourn. While mourning eventually a point comes when one must renew their strength. Waiting in the Lord can do this.

It is also a waiting that calls us to renew our minds in the Word thus transforming us from being without knowledge to having more knowledge of those things that can shape us in faith and in our way of doing things. Waiting gives us time to meditate on the knowledge gained and then employ that knowledge. Waiting ponders the choices ahead of us and reasons out how those choices may play out. Examples may include what college to go to; to go ahead with a procedure; or to give your heart to a significant other.

Waiting should not be passive in opportunities that the Lord puts before us because as 1 Corinthians 15:58 reminds us nothing we do in the Lord is done in vain, not even waiting. Eventually, though, at some point we must summon the courage to make the left turn or get on with the next thing. At some point we must step out of the waiting places and into the opportunities that are placed before us, especially by the Lord.

When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water, Peter literally stepped out of the boat and walked on the water. Curiosity? Maybe. A challenge? Possibly. But Peter didn't wait in the boat. Ephesians 5:6 tell us to "make the most of every opportunity..." Peter did what he could in that moment and for a brief few steps his trust in the Lord was wonderful. Yes, he sank, but Peter was the only one of those disciples to know what it was like to walk on water like Jesus. Opportunities may include meeting a person at just the right place and time who needs you to be there or they for you. Or it may lead to finding just the right person to call for a Music director at Grace. At some point it's important to recognize an opportunity when it comes upon us.

Nobody likes to wait, especially when the waiting seems to be without purpose or meaning. Waiting is meant to hold within it, purpose, waiting for a reason; anticipating the next thing, especially in the Lord. Waiting in the Lord is meant to shape everything about us so much so that faith always holds its focus on the resurrection. Perhaps the most significant way we measure waiting of any kind is by what comes next. And the Lord knows that experience has shown us that what comes next after waiting isn't always good news or happy circumstances. We often get tired of waiting on doctors to make something happen. Yet waiting in the Lord is unique in that we are waiting for that which not of this world, built by the Lord. And that is what the Word of God wants us to keep focusing on.

So, wait patiently. Your waiting on the Lord is not in vain. Our waiting in the Lord holds within it the blessings of heaven.

John 3:30

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