

Isaiah 30:18-22 (NKJV)

18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.

19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; You shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you.

20 And though the Lord gives you The bread of adversity and the water of affliction, Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, But your eyes shall see your teachers.

21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left.

22 You will also defile the covering of your graven images of silver, And the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; You will say to them, "Get away!"

What has the Lord's work changed in your life?

If our walk in faith is real, we all have a story of the changes God has made. Think about it. From the day when you responded to God's call on your life, what changes has He caused? What is your testimony. We all, if we are believers can say, I once was lost but now am found. And we can never make too much of that. But what has happened since then.

What were you **then** that you are not **now**?

What were you not **then** that you are **now**?

That is what our text is about this morning. God waits on us until we wait on God. And when that happens, he can finally bless us in ways that would have **done harm** to us earlier.

This one concept probably explains a lot about our lives. We sometimes wonder why hard times came into our lives. We sometime wonder why God did not provide for us **early** what He eventually provided for us **later**. And the answer to that question is sometimes the single word- **waiting**. **God was waiting.**

18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.

The Hebrew word for wait is interesting here. And oddly enough, the same word is used for **us waiting for God** and **God waiting for us**.

It indicates delaying an action. It refers to longing or hoping for something to happen. But it means to wait in order to accomplish one's purpose, good or bad *Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament*.

This is an important truth that we need to grasp about God. God sometimes **waits** in order to accomplish His purpose in our lives. Think about this.

Where would we be if we served an **impatient God**? Really? How long has it taken us sometimes to **learn lessons we needed to learn** before we could go to the next step? A week, a month, a year, 5 years, a decade? What if God was not willing to wait? What if he lost his patience and responded in anger? We would all either be destroyed or abandoned.

But that is not the case. Our God is long suffering. He suffers long, waiting for what needs to happen in our lives. Oh how thankful we should be for this.

Sometimes we get frustrated with each other when we can't get through to initiate the changes needed in another person's life for a long time. Well if we saw **our own lives** from God's perspective we would realize we aren't paying a fraction of a price for our brothers and sisters that **God has paid for us**.

To keep this in perspective, remember our text. Verses 1-17 tell us about the destruction that is going to happen to Judea as it stands. They will be found **running for their lives** when all of the resources they have lined up and depended upon failed them. How awful that is. But you know what? That is what God was waiting on.

The same thing happens to us. Sometimes something awful must happen in our lives' before we begin to get with God's program. Often, before this test we think we are just fine. But we find out **in the test** that we really weren't what we thought we were. We have to see ourselves as we truly are before we are ready to **learn what God wants us to learn**. Sometimes we have to make horrible choices before we discover that we really do need help. We really cannot live the Christian life as God wants it lived as we are. We need a change. We need God's work in our lives.

We may question- why did God **not do this** or why did **God not do that?** It is as if we blame what **we had to learn** on God. But the blame for His delay is most often based on our unwillingness, as is in our text. Odds are that it did not matter what God would have done. Even if he had sent us an angel to tell us something, it is quite likely it would not have had the effect on us we think it would have. We give ourselves way too much credit. Life had to play out as it did for us to be ready to make changes. Sometimes in God's ministry to us and even in our ministry to each other, the only thing to be done is wait.

Things have to play out. We ask, How long oh Lord. He answers, whenever you are ready.

Have you ever sent a child to his or her room for having a bad attitude? We tell them, come out when you are ready to act like a reasonable human being or something like that. Then we wait. That is the kind of waiting God does. The wait is normally our fault, not His.

18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.

Now, what is the Lord's motivation in waiting? Is it to rob us of help? Is it to make us grovel? Is it a game to show His superiority? I'm sure sometimes we attribute those wrong motives to God, like a little kid angry at his parents. We project ourselves on Him. But none of that is the case.

He waits so that He can be gracious. And what is the end result in Him showing us grace? He will be exalted. And what is the outcome of being exalted? God shows mercy. Then how does it end? The Lord is a God of justice.

Wow. How do we unwrap all of that? Well let's start with God's justice. I think it is God's justice that is the ultimate reason that God chooses to wait. Our behavior, if greeted by God with what it deserves, would have us die a million deaths. And God is a God of justice. There is no doubt about it.

Nahum 1:2-3 (NKJV)

2 God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies;

3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way In the whirlwind and in the storm, And the clouds are the dust of His feet.

What would have happened to us if God was not willing to wait. Suppose he judged us the day before He drew us to Himself? We would have been damned, and rightly so. But He did not do that. He waited. And by waiting God could remain Just and still save us. I think that is the gist of this passage. God is Just. There is no avoiding that fact. But God's patience provides us a just deliverance. We receive that which God provided that takes God's just expression of His wrath on His Son instead of on us. We got that because God waited.

We learn elsewhere that God's waiting is always about His people. It is always about grace and mercy.

2 Peter 3:8-9 (NKJV)

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

To understand God's timing, to understand God's waiting, all we need to understand is God's grace. God wants to be gracious and merciful to His people. He wants to withhold what we deserve for those things that **we did** while He was waiting. He wants to grant us what we could never deserve once we have reached the place that **He can give it to us without destroying us.**

And we learn from the 2nd Peter verse that God has no trouble waiting. God never gets impatient. When God waits a thousand years to accomplish what He wants, that is similar to us waiting until tomorrow. It is no wonder that we often wish God would hurry up a little.

But we need to keep in mind, in everything **God does** and everything **He does not do**, at the end of the day it is **about Him**. God will be exalted. He will wait as long as He must to **make of us** something that will God will be exalted by. He will do whatever is necessary for us thick skulled humans to get ready to make much of God.

Just this one verse can help us understand a lot about God's work in our lives. We can better understand His timing. We can better understand His waiting so long sometimes. And we can understand His intent. And that leads to the last phrase in our verse.

Blessed are all those who wait for Him.

This phrase is based on all that went before. It is **because we know that God wants to extend us grace and mercy** that we can wait. It is **because we know that He wants us to avoid facing His justice** that we can wait. It is because **we are confident in His love** that we can wait. It is because we know that **He is exalted, that He is worthy**, that we can wait.

We have worked our way back to trust in the character of God again. What are you praying for and waiting for in your life? What is it that you wish God would hurry up and do in your life? Our passage is giving us direction this morning. This is God's message to you in that area of your life. Trust God.

You will find yourself in **the best state you can be in in your present circumstances** if you will just wait for God. Keep praying. Keep persevering. Keep your eyes focused on your Lord. And wait. You are already blessed if that is the state you are in. This verse does not say the person who waits **will**

be blessed. It says the person who waits on God **IS** blessed. That is where we should all be. If we are going to make it through this life, we are going to have to learn to live by waiting. Ultimately, this world is not our home. There is a sense that we are waiting for true life to begin. This world is not **the event**. It is **the preparation for the event**. We are only passing through. And the destination is not the end. It is the beginning.

And it has to be emphasized here that we are waiting **for God**. We aren't waiting for life to get better. We aren't waiting for better times. We are not waiting for a human resolution. We are waiting for God to move.

Let's read from one of the most famous waiters on God in Scripture.

Psalm 25:1-5 (NKJV)

1 To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

2 O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me.

3 Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.

4 Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths.

5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You *are* the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.

Psalm 25:17-21 (NKJV)

17 The troubles of my heart have enlarged; Bring me out of my distresses!

18 Look on my affliction and my pain, And forgive all my sins.

19 Consider my enemies, for they are many; And they hate me with cruel hatred.

20 Keep my soul, and deliver me; Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.

21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for You.

Psalm 27:13-14 (NKJV)

13 I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.

14 Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!

Psalm 33:20-21 (NKJV)

20 Our soul waits for the LORD; He *is* our help and our shield.

21 For our heart shall rejoice in Him, Because we have trusted in His holy name.

We might be tempted to say, yeah, that was easy for David to say. But look at the hardships of his life. He was surrounded by personal enemies all of the time. He lost many of the most important people in his life. His son turned against him. Another son raped one of his daughters. He was constantly sending himself and his children into danger. How long did David have to run for his life while Saul hunted him down like a rabbit. Don't you think he was asking, how long God? This isn't the plan you revealed to me. I thought you had great things in store for me. David also lived with the guilt of committing adultery and murder. He lived life in the trenches, just like we do. And his answer was as true for **him** as it is for **us**. We must trust God and wait for Him to do what He wants to do in our lives. We must live by trusting. And that means to live by waiting.

Let's move on in our text.

19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; You shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you.

This would have been music to the ears of anyone who was believing Isaiah's prophesy. I have often read of congregations who got rid of their pastors because they were too negative. Jonathan Edwards congregation got rid of him. A W Tozer's church got rid of him. They wanted things to be upbeat. But what we need more than **positive** is the **truth**. The undistorted undiluted truth. Isaiah was telling the truth. The rulers hated Jeremiah for the truth he was telling. But those who were the faithful ones wanted to know the truth. Because the truth tells the bad, but with God, it is always followed by the good. It is like our own salvation. First we hear the bad news. Only then are we prepared for the good news. Here Isaiah talks about disaster. But it is quickly followed with the reality of restoration. The leaders did not want to hear about the disaster. But the people who are waiting on God are delighted to hear about the rescue of God's people.

No one wanted to know that they were going to weep. None of us want to know **that** is what is coming in our lives. But those who wait on the Lord trust that it will be made worthwhile. **Weeping isn't so bad when we know that laughter will follow.**

Notice here too what God seemed to be waiting for. The sound of your cry. People who are trusting in their own plan don't cry to God for help. People who depend on other gods do not cry to God for help. Only someone who

knows their way isn't working, only those who know they will not make it without help every day cry out to God in a way that is moving to God. But when we pray that way, **God is then done waiting**. This is, after all, what He was waiting for.

This is the God we serve. He is very gracious to us when we cry out to Him in this state. When we will see, experience, and lament about **who we are**, when we are finally willing to **accept God's terms**, He is swift to answer our prayer. He is quick to meet our need. He is quick to give us what we ask for. Because his plan has been successful in finally getting us to see and admit and ask for what we really need. And that often does not come quick. Hence the need to wait.

We need to get this. Our Lord is never slow to meet the needs of His people when they have reached the point of admitting their need and calling out to God to meet it.

Sometimes it is God's will for brothers and sisters to suffer. So the problem is not that they aren't ready for Him to help them. They may sincerely ask amiss. How could they know? **It is** like God to rescue us. So it is right to ask. So just because we ask for something and don't get it doesn't always mean there is a problem with us. But if God is trying to get us to a certain point before He can meet that need, He will respond quickly when we reach it.

20 And though the Lord gives you The bread of adversity and the water of affliction, Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, But your eyes shall see your teachers.

21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left.

God used affliction and adversity to get His people ready for His ministry to them. It got them to the place where they cried out to the true God with a true heart for God. It reduced them to the place where they knew what they needed and they knew the only one who could give it to them. Isn't that the point of change in all our lives. As we look at the most significant works of God in our lives, the points of greatest change, isn't this what we see?

And what happens when God's people take on the right attitude toward God? Suddenly they become very receptive to **the words of God**. Suddenly the words of God take the proper place in their lives. Suddenly they **must know** what God says before they take another step, before they make another decision. And that is exactly what we see here.

The prophets of God were no longer hid in a corner. They no longer had to hide their ministry in order to stay alive. The leaders and the common people

both were adversarial to prophets like Isaiah. But a time is promised when the ministry of the prophet will be welcomed. It will become clearly evident who is speaking for God. The people of God will know and recognize the spokespeople for God.

Isn't God's ministry to us amazing. Isn't it wonderful how **He makes us care about and seek out His word** once He has had His way in our lives. Suddenly we care about how He wants us to live. That can only be described as a miracle.

And then verse 21 tells us the relationship of the word to these same people's lives. From this point forward the waiters on God act like sheep who are being directed by a shepherd. We have the ministry of reconciliation active in the body of Christ. Whenever we step off the path we have God's word delivered to us telling us both **what the proper path is** and **what we need to do to get back to it**.

Do you see how wonderful this is. God starts with a useless bunch of people. They cannot possibly gain anything from anything God would do. So he sends adversity and suffering. And God waits. Then out of those ashes arise a people who want God, need God, must have God and are glad to obey God. And God responds quickly and decisively to them when they call out to Him. That is what He waited for.

He provides for them His spokespeople. He provides His word for them. And they value it and obey it. They screw up. But they adjust quickly.

Now look what they do with all the alternatives. This is wonderful.

22 You will also defile the covering of your graven images of silver, And the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; You will say to them, "Get away!"

This is it. This is what we have wanted to see since the beginning of our study. Here is a group of people who look at all of the things that **they have depended upon to give them what only God could provide for them**. They look at them and they say "Get out of here. Get lost." Or like Gollum in the Lord of the rings said- Go away and never come back.

I have always liked to fish. And I used to bring fish home to clean. When I would bring them into the house I was instructed that those fish were not going to find their way to my mom's sink. She viewed them as an unclean thing and regarded them with disgust. That is the attitude that these followers of God had toward their idols. These people had finally reached the point that they saw those things they had previously worshipped as filthy worthless disgusting objects. That is perfect. That is exactly what God wants in our lives. We have talked a lot about idolatry in this study. Hopefully you

have defined in your life what idols are most tempting to you. Can we say to our competitive gods, along with these converted Israelites, go away and never come back? Can we view them with disgust? That is what God is shooting for in our lives. That is what He is waiting to have happen.

Our God is a jealous God. And He deserves to be. Only He is worthy of glory, honor and power. Only He is Holy. Only He is Sovereign. Only He is God. Only He can provide for our needs. At the end of the day the question is, will we worship Him? Or must He wait until He gets through to us all the futility of everything we have tried as a replacement?

I guess the real question from our text is, why waste time? Why waste time **making God wait for us** when we could submit to Him right now? Why cling to any other course of action when we could accept **His course of action** right now? Why do anything in our lives that is futile and never provides what we most want and need, when only God can provide what we most want and need? Why trust in anything to bring about the changes we need other than the God who alone can make those changes? And if the path the Lord has for us is a painful one, why not focus our attention on waiting on our Lord for the deliverance from our circumstances, even if that waiting takes a lifetime. If we focus only on our suffering we will develop a mistrust in God. If we focus on the trustworthiness of God, it will give our suffering perspective. Why make God wait on us? It gets us nowhere. It is our blessed position to wait on Him.

Our prophet Isaiah is going to soon reveal one more wonderful truth in Isaiah 40.

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV)

³¹ But those who wait on 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.

