

Chiyo Miyako, the world's oldest person at 117 died in Japan last week. Mayako's family said they called her "the goddess" and remembered her as a chatty person who was patient and kind to others, according to Guinness World Records that certified her title.

Are you patient by nature as Chiyo, few are. How do you love to wait in a long grocery checkout line? How do you love waiting 2 and ½ hours for a pizza delivery? One of my pet peeves is waiting for someone who has a scheduled appointment.

II Thessalonians 3:5 directs us to be patient in waiting. Patient here means to keep our hearts loyal to him or to incline our hearts toward God. We wait because we believe Christ came once in the flesh and will come again in glory. Paul's prayer is for the Lord to direct our hearts to endurance in waiting for the return of Christ. Waiting supposes faith in God regardless of circumstances or length of wait. This is what we are taught in Habakkuk 2:1–4.

Habakkuk is a book that can teach us how to handle difficult times when we must wait. It would be naïve and presumptuous to say trying times won't come into our lives, Job 5:7. Habakkuk starts with a great complaint to God, saying, "Why? Look at all this evil and suffering you're allowing." God's first response is, "It's going to get worse. I'm going to bring the Chaldeans. They're going to invade."

The prophet prayed. God had a first answer. Habakkuk prayed again, and God had a second answer. In the interlude in chapter 2 verses 1–4 Habakkuk waits upon the Lord. Here is major insight into the Bible's teaching about waiting on the Lord.

### 1. Patience

Let's start in verse 3, where God says, "For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it; Because it will surely come, it will not tarry." God says, "I'm going to give you some answers. I'm going to send them to you, you can be sure of them, but they will linger, it will take time, so wait for it."

*Wait* means, "Be patient, delay action, tarry in order for purposes to be accomplished." If you're waiting for a friend to take you to an event and they don't come, and you take Uber, you've given up on your friend. If you're in a doctor's office and you're waiting, and the Dr. doesn't call for you and you just go home, you've given up. *Wait* means be patient. *Wait* means don't give up.

It means don't get upset and be agitated, be patient. Waiting on the Lord means when everything makes no sense, when you're confused, perplexed, you don't know what's going on in your life, instead of giving up, blowing up, be patient, God is faithful. That's what waiting on the Lord means.

God provides all things in nature for all his creatures He has made; how much more will He provide in grace for those He has redeemed. Learn to say of every desire, failure, and need, "I must wait upon God. In due season He will give all that is needed."

We usually say, “Lord give me this patience,” and what we usually mean is “Give it to me in an instant.” We would like for it to come over us like a rain cloud. The Bible waiting on God comes from *humility*. James 4:13-16. When things go wrong, we are angry, and we are in despair, wait. We think of our worry and our fear as feelings we can’t help. Such feelings arise out of a belief that we know absolutely what we need. We basically are saying that we are omniscient, and we should not have to wait on God. What pride we have!

The smartest and most spiritual do not see all ends. When you are freaking out because such and such must happen that means you think you know everything. Humans are not omniscient. Be humble, be patient. James 1:2-6.

Romans 5:3. “And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; <sup>4</sup> And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” When negative circumstances come our way, they are doing a work whether we can see it or not, and that work will shed abroad God’s love in our hearts. Will you wait? Pressure can turn a lump of coal into a diamond.

It is difficult to lie still in a dentist’s chair but being still is the way to go. No doubt Saul wished he would have waited, I Samuel 13:8-14. When circumstances hit, you can throw a tantrum and become bitter or you can be patient and turn into someone peaceful and of great endurance. When troubles hit you, it’s either going to drive you toward the Lord, or drive you away.

Job 23:10, Job says, “But he knoweth the way that I take: *When* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” “But he knoweth” is another way of saying, “I don’t know what he is doing with me, but he knows.” Then Job says, “...I shall come forth as gold.” To wait is to be patient like Job.

## **2. Distance**

Do you realize you can prove anything if your knowledge is sufficiently limited. Of course, most likely your conclusions will be wrong, but you will have convinced yourself. It is important therefore that in times of severe testing, our question must not be, “*How* can I get out of this?” but “*What* can I get out of this?” What we can get is a long distance view of what God has done for us.

Habakkuk 2:1 says, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower.” He is waiting to hear from God. Towers are built so you can see what’s coming from a distance. You can see whether a news runner is coming, or enemies are in the distance. You can see what’s coming from up in the tower! You get a distance view of it. It is that distant view that gives you the information for the here and now.

When Habakkuk says “I’m waiting on the Lord by going into the tower” what that indicates is you must not just simply look at your problems. You must put them in the bigger perspective of everything about God.

Romans 8:18, “For I reckon ...” Reckon means, the sum is, the end result is, you think it through, you deduct the result. He says, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are

not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Paul had a lot of suffering. He looked at his suffering while in the tower. Looking at the end of his life, his sufferings looked small.

Do you look at your life now by going into the tower? When sick, you should go to the tower and say, “The only sickness that can really kill me, which is sin, is gone. It’s been paid for.” When you are in over your head say, “I’m in debt, but, the only debt that can really bankrupt me is sin, and that has been paid for. There are true riches at the end of time that I will have, nothing I could possibly amass here on the earth is anything compared to that.” Waiting on the Lord is not a passive thing; waiting on the Lord means viewing life now from the tower of scriptural truth that tells us about then.

### **3. Obedience**

**Verse 2** says, “I will stand upon my watch ...” Those who have been in the military know this. If you’re on guard duty, it doesn’t matter whether you feel badly, you’re sleepy, or you’re bored. It doesn’t matter how you feel you may not leave your post. You must do your duty. Obedience is living without scheming. It is obeying God regardless of feelings, circumstances, or consequences, knowing that He is working. This is Habakkuk showing us that even though he is struggling he will not leave his post.

You may feel God is absent. You may be getting nothing out of your Christian walk. You may be confused about what’s going on. You may be disappointed with your life. Your prayers may be unanswered. Even so you can’t leave your post. We are to obey the Lord.

*Waiting* doesn’t mean waiting around. “Waiters” and “waitresses” certainly don’t wait around. They fulfill their duty to serve, because to wait means to serve. Waiting on the Lord means when you don’t feel like it, you still do your duty.

When God seems absent, and evil times, disappointments, or difficulties, are ongoing it is tempting to stop doing what we usually do. We stop going to worship, we stop private prayer, we stop reading our Bible, and we stop serving people. Because of selfishness and self-pity, we discontinue obeying the Lord. We end up serving self we will feel worse than if we had waited on the Lord. If a guard leaves his post because he was bored and tired, he will still be court martialed.

We long for an easy religion, a religion easy to understand and follow; a religion with no mystery, problems, or snags. A religion though that would allow us to escape our miserable condition; a religion in which serving God eliminates all strife, all uncertainty, all suffering and all doubt is a religion without a Cross.

Just think, if you are getting nothing out of your prayer time. I can tell you if you quit you will get nothing at all out of your prayer time. However, if you keep praying, scripture says we will find grace and mercy to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Also, in Luke eighteen we have the example of the unjust judge answering the widow who persevered in her praying. Waiting on the Lord is continuing to be obedient even if you see no results in the present.

A Professor of History once said, “If Columbus had turned back, nobody would have blamed him—but nobody would have remembered him either.” If you want to be memorable, sometimes you have to be miserable. In times where you’re weary, you’re disappointed, you’re empty, you don’t know why

God is not answering your prayers, it’s very easy to be so desperate you will sin in sex, with money, or by food just to feel better. Then afterwards, you feel even worse. That’s leaving your post.

We can ask why difficulties have happened, why things are so hard, or why it seems God has gone on a journey, but remember, God doesn’t owe us an answer. We must rest in his wisdom and wait. Even if the Lord did tell us why things have happened the way they are, that would not necessarily ease our pain or heal our broken hearts. Does reading the X ray take away the pain of a broken leg? We must be obedient, living on God’s ultimate *promises*, not present explanations.

#### **4. Reverence**

When you are waiting on the Lord’s answers and on the Lord’s reward, and no answers come, go into the tower and stand at your watch anyway. This is what worship consists of, this is what reverencing the Lord looks like.

Habakkuk has been called a mini-book of Job. In Job Satan said to God, “If you take away Jobs family, take away his wealth, and finally take away his health, then you’ll see he was not loving you for yourself. He was only loving you for the things he was getting. He wasn’t waiting on you. He was waiting on things from you. He will curse you.”

Satan is basically right. When we turn to God we’re often looking for something. Yet, if somebody loved you but were getting benefits out of your connections, and you lost those connections, and that person just dropped you like a stone, how would you feel? I’ve seen people who have said, “Oh, I used to go to church. I prayed for things, and God never gave me anything, so I quit.

Waiting on the Lord means to reverence him for who he is in himself. That means to be faithful to him even when you’re getting nothing out of it at all. In times of trouble you have an opportunity to turn your self-interested, exploitative relationship with God into deep love.

Sometime back a person came to me about a very difficult circumstance in his relationships because of he was a Christian. We visited for a while and I became aware he knew what he was right about how should respond. I also realized he knew it would so difficult to take the right road that he didn’t know if he could do it. What could I say? I said, “Remember the Savior endured the cross and despised the shame for you. Keep your eye upon Him and you will have strength to do whatever you must in this situation. He said, “Oh that helps so much.” He revered God in that moment.

Oh, the unspeakable worship offered to God in our time of darkness. It is not the days of sunshine and splendor that leave their lasting and indelible effect upon the soul, but dark nights of confusion, when shadowed by God’s hand.

In our times of difficulty, the Lord hides us in the cleft of some rock in our weary land and He lets the splendors of Himself pass before our gaze. We are blessed, and he is worshipped.

If you look at people who wrestle with God and get no answers, and they're angry, struggling, and asking God hard questions, but in the end, they stay with God, it is because they've become servants. They've become people who reverence him for who he is. They're serving him because he is God. They're loving him for who he is in himself. This is the living by his faith (2:4).

Whenever darkness descends on you, whenever things happen to you and you get disappointed and you're really upset with how everything is going in your life, ask a question whether you're committed to a relationship with God to serve him or to get him to serve you.

This verse is quoted three times in the New Testament. It says, "... but the just shall live by his faith ..." God is saying to Habakkuk, "Be patient. Wait on me. Be unconditionally obedient and faithful in this difficulty." Faith is not just stoically holding on to God, it is a blessed joyful reverent submission knowing he has our best in view.

Instead of looking at the circumstances around us, waiting on God is relying in faith in the redemptive declarations of God. In other words, instead of looking at your circumstances and being affected by them, be affected by what God has done for you in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ in Luke 12 is telling a parable about a master who goes away on a trip. He leaves his servants behind. Some of the servants are obedient and faithful because they're sure he is coming back. Others are disobedient and unfaithful because they don't think he is coming back.

It's Jesus' way of saying, "I want my followers to wait for me. I want them to wait on me. I want them to live patiently. I want them to live obediently because they're waiting for me." I want them to live by faith. Then in Luke 12:37, Jesus completes the parable like this. He says, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

There's the ultimate example of patience. Here's what I want to ask you. If you see Jesus Christ, the Lord of the universe, willing to lay aside his celestial glory and joy and come down and wait on you by going through Gethsemane and enduring the cross under the wrath of God, why can't you wait for him now? Why can't you wait until he comes again?

Christ waited from all eternity, Gal 4:4. Christ waited for three and one-half years. Christ waited six hours upon the Cross. Christ waited three days. Christ waited forty days. He is waiting his return, Mark 13:32. If you see him waiting on you in the past and waiting on you in the future, you'll be able to wait on him now. You'll be able to reverence him by doing all he requires in your life and do all of this with joy. If you wait on him patiently, obediently, unconditionally, fully, you will find real freedom (John 14:3,28; Acts 1:9-11; I Thessalonians 4:14-18).