

Waiting – Sunday 26th April, 2015

“Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:4-5;8).

Beloved in The Lord,

I don't know about you, but personally I find it difficult to wait for things. By nature, I am somewhat of an impatient person. I can easily relate to the man who prayed: *“Lord, give me patience, but I want it right now!”* It is true, that one of the hardest places to be in life, is to be in God's waiting room. You are awaiting an answer to prayer; or seeking direction from Him; and it seems like the answer will never arrive. During these times, we are very vulnerable and need to be aware of the devils tricks. One of his favorites is to encourage us to take matters into our own hands and not wait for God to answer or to act. Satan tells us that God has forgotten about us; or that God has given us enough wisdom to handle it on our own and we don't need to bother Him. Why wait for God when you can handle it quite well on your own? We must realise that these are lies from the devil and that being impatient and not waiting on God, always leads to adverse consequences.

A very powerful illustration is Abraham. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and as uncountable as the sand of the sea. God promised Abraham that he would have a son. Sarah, Abrahams wife knew this, but seeing as she was barren and didn't wait upon God; she in her unbelief hatched a plan to help God out. Sarah gave her maid Hagar to Abraham as a wife, in the hope that Hagar would have a child by him. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to Ishmael.

The problem was that this was not what God intended when He promised Abraham a son. Ishmael became the father of the Arab nation and we know that right up to this day there has been enmity between the descendants of Ishmael (The Arabs) and the descendants of Isaac (The Jews). Had Abraham and Sarah waited faithfully for God to fulfill His plans then the world stage and history would look a lot different.

There are of course many other examples that I could give, but I think this one serves our purposes for today. The lesson we learn is that it is always important to wait upon God, and to operate on His timetable – His way. This of course is only logical and wise, because God is the only one who knows all things and who rules over all. Martin Luther knew this and that is why he wrote:

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he; Lord Sabaoth,*

his name, from age to age the same, and he must win the battle.

It is precisely for the reason that we cannot rely on our own strength that Jesus told His disciples to wait. He had given them the great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus had told them to go and spread the Gospel. But Jesus also knew that they will not succeed under their own power and wisdom. That is why He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for The Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit will inspire them, empower them and work through them.

Jesus said: “but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:5;8).

The power to live the Christian life comes from The Holy Spirit. He is the one who breathes life into us; who works miracles; who enlightens; who protects and comforts; who speaks to our heart and shows us God’s way. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher and guide. He enables us to understand the Bible. Jesus taught about Him:

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you. (John 16:7-15)

Without The Holy Spirit we cannot live life as God intended; we cannot live a life that honours Him and that fulfils His plans and purposes. We need to learn to listen to and rely upon The Holy Spirit. We need to recognise His voice and become sensitive to His promptings. We need to pray earnestly that He would lead us and guide us in all things; and that He would grant us wisdom and understanding.

We read in Psalm 130:

“Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord.

² Lord, hear my voice!

Let Your ears be attentive

To the voice of my supplications.

³ If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,

O Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But there is forgiveness with You,

That You may be feared.

⁵ *I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait,
And in His word do I hope.*

⁶ *My soul waits for the Lord
More than the watchmen for the morning;
Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.*

⁷ *O Israel, hope in the Lord;
For with the Lord there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.*

⁸ *And He will redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.*

This Psalm is very beautiful. This Psalm encourages us to teach our soul to wait upon The Lord. We need to wait with an expectant hope. The watchmen wait and hope for the morning. They are constantly looking and waiting. This is how we should be toward God – looking to Him with an earnest expectation.

We live in a fast pace world and society. People are no longer prepared to wait and are rarely trained to do so. Everything needs to be now. No one has time to wait. People like to grab and go. This is why fast food is so popular. There are food chains that make it possible for you to pick up your meal driving through. You don't even have to leave your car. You drive to the window; get your burger and go.

I read about a Church in America that offers drive through Confession; Absolution and Communion. You don't even have to leave your car.

True blessings come to the one who waits upon the Lord. We need to spend time with God. Time that we invest reading the Bible; meditating upon it; praying and praising and worshipping God; is always time that is well spent. We just read in Psalm 130: ***“For with the Lord there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.”***

God blesses those who wait upon Him. We read in Psalm 33:

***“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope for His lovingkindness,***

¹⁹ ***To deliver their soul from death
And to keep them alive in famine.***

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

²¹ ***For our heart rejoices in Him,
Because we trust in His holy name.***

²² ***Let Your lovingkindness, O Lord, be upon.” (18-22)***

We are clearly told that the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness. When we wait upon the Lord, we can lose. We find this truth over and over again in the Bible. For example Psalm 37:

***“Trust in the Lord and do good;
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.
⁴ Delight yourself in the Lord;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.
⁵ Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.
⁶ He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
And your judgment as the noonday.
⁷ Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him;”(3-7a).***

These are very powerful promises and they are made to the one who waits upon The Lord. My prayer for you and also for me is that we would take careful note of these Words, and that we would indeed wait upon The Lord; Trust in Him in all things. As we do, The Holy Spirit will use us mightily and we will be blessed.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.