
Waiting on God to Act

By David Wilkerson

June 28, 2010 Dearly Beloved:

I WANT TO SPEAK A WORD TO YOU FROM MY HEART.

Some readers may wonder why I talk so often lately about the afflictions and sufferings of God's people. This is simply because so many people are right now enduring the greatest trials of their lifetime.

Let me share with you out of the midst of some personal and family afflictions. We know what it's like to endure suffering, pain and seasons of stress and anxiety. As a young preacher I preached much about faith — but those messages had not been tested in the fires and floods of pain and suffering. Now, in my old age, I know what it means to cling to God's promises. I know what it means to cry out to God, "Lord, how long does this go on?" I know about weariness of mind, spirit and body.

To all who know what I speak of, let me say this: God is still king over the floods. King David wrote, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me: thy rod and staff comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). This is where my faith is renewed daily — knowing that God is with his people in and through it all. He is with you even now.

Psalm 22:24 tells us, "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard." God has not hid his face from you—he has heard your every cry. When fear strikes your heart, go immediately into his presence and pour your heart out to him. "When he cried unto him, he heard." He is faithful to make a way.

I have set my heart on one glorious truth I'd like to share. I believe it is a life-freeing word: Hold your position in Christ. If you believe Jesus is the Son of God — crucified and raised from the dead for you — you are by faith in Christ in a heavenly place. You have been reconciled to God by the death of Christ. You are out of judgment, with no wrath on you. This has happened not by an effort to improve yourself. God accepts you and delights in you because you are his by adoption. He sees you as righteous in Christ. Therefore, he does not impute any sin against you.

The Holy Spirit abides in us to bring us to this revelation. And I believe it is impossible for any of us to face the days ahead until we are at total peace about our position in Christ. The Holy Spirit will lead you to be conformed to the image of Christ, but right now — at this very hour — you have full access to God's throne. You are accepted and you are loved — and it is all because the Father took the initiative to reconcile you to himself.

Once you accept and cling to this victory of the cross, you can face the future with hope and peace. I hope this word from my heart will encourage you.

Thank you also for remembering our ministry worldwide to the poor, the needy, the widowed and fatherless. For information on these efforts and others, go to: www.worldchallenge.org/missions .

Love in Christ,
DAVID WILKERSON

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Newsletter: Waiting on God to Act

June 28, 2010 I believe few Christians consider themselves impatient. Most true followers of Jesus will admit they have not arrived, that they're not as Christ-like as they want to be. They will tell you there are areas in their lives that need great improvement. But few Christians recognize in themselves a certain form of impatience that is spiritual in nature.

It is subtle yet it can cause confusion in the lives of God's most faithful servants. Indeed, it has affected the faithful walk of many. To help with understanding this, let me suggest this impatience is a form of pride. And I draw this definition directly from Scripture: *Pride is independence, while humility is dependence.*

The kind of pride I'm talking about is an impatience to wait for God to act in his own time and way. It rushes to take matters into its own hands. After decades in ministry, I'm convinced this is one of the greatest temptations facing any true Christian: to act hurriedly on our own when it appears God isn't working fast enough.

One of the clearest biblical examples of one who couldn't wait for God's time is King Saul. Saul committed this very sin at Gilgal, early in his kingship over Israel. The prophet Samuel had anointed Saul as king, and now the two men discussed the great war that Israel faced against the Philistines. Samuel made it clear to Saul that he was the man divinely called to break the bondage that the Philistines held over Israel.

As the time for war grew near, Samuel commanded Saul to wait for him before moving into battle. All the people were to gather at Gilgal to seek the Lord for direction, and Samuel would return then with a specific word of direction from the Lord. He told Saul, "Seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do" (1 Samuel 10:8).

Simply put, God alone was to remain in total control. The war plan against the Philistines was to be all his doing. Samuel represented the voice of the Lord, and through him Israel would receive supernatural, sovereign guidance. God himself was going to form all of Israel's plans and show them how to wage war.

So Saul was to wait at Gilgal for word to come from Samuel. But the war commenced sooner than expected, when Saul's son Jonathan smote a Philistine garrison at Geba. When this happened, Saul blew the trumpet to gather all the people together at Gilgal.

Yet as he waited there, Saul grew impatient for Samuel to arrive. The Philistines were on the move, but according to God's command Saul himself couldn't stir until Samuel brought forth the word to direct Israel in battle.

Meanwhile, the Israelite army was in a panic. They were a small, motley militia with not a single sword among them. All they had were axes and farm tools, while their enemy was made up of 6,000

horsemen, thousands of chariots, and soldiers who appeared to them as numerous as the sand on the seashore. As that massive, well-armed Philistine military drew near, Saul's men got scared. Soon they were deserting on all sides.

God knew all along that Israel would be in this situation. Indeed, this was the very war crisis that Samuel had discussed with Saul to prepare him. No matter the size or might of their enemy, the Israelites were to gather in faith to wait on God for his clear word of direction. This wasn't just to be a matter of waiting, but of "waiting until" — *until* the word came, *until* direction from heaven was given. Samuel had told Saul clearly, "Wait till I come to thee and show thee."

Instead, Saul gave God a deadline to act. He didn't declare it, but it was a deadline he determined in his heart. Saul decided that if a word from above didn't come by a certain time, he would do whatever was needed to save the situation.

"And (Saul) tarried [waited] seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering" (1 Samuel 13:8-9).

Impatiently, Saul moved ahead, sinfully acting as a priest to make the sacrifice. Little did he know that Samuel was just around the bend. Soon the prophet would arrive, smelling the sacrifice Saul had offered and becoming incensed at the king's sinful impatience.

Samuel was just a few hours late because Saul was being tested. I'm convinced Samuel was delayed because God spoke to him clearly, telling him exactly when to arrive. You see, this was a test to see whether Saul would believe that God could be trusted. It would tell whether Saul would patiently wait in faith even if things were not right on schedule.

The fact is God had orchestrated it all. He had wanted to give Saul a testimony of humble dependence on him in all things, especially in a dark crisis. But Saul failed the test. He looked at the worsening conditions and it all appeared hopeless. Logic told him the hour had gotten too late, that something had to be done.

Can you picture yourself in Saul's situation? I hear him reasoning to himself, "I can't take this indecision any longer. God sent me to do his work and I'm willing to die for his cause. So, do I really have to sit here doing nothing? I have to make something happen or this will be the end. If I don't act, everything will spin out of control."

Saul felt a gripping need to act immediately in the situation. And finally his impatience overwhelmed him.

I have to admit, this is where I have failed at times in my walk with the Lord. At certain times I have not waited for direction and taken matters into my own hands. I simply don't like feeling helpless and

anxious. I have never felt more so than when we moved back to New York in the 1980s to start Times Square Church.

After years on property we owned in Texas, I was once again subject to the mercy of landlords and building superintendents' schedules. When things didn't work I had to wait, and it made me impatient. For a while we rented space from theater owners on Broadway, and I grew anxious to have a building of our own. I cried, "Lord, there's so much to be done in New York and so little time. How long do we have to wait? We need you to act."

Yet time after time God patiently answered me, "David, do you trust me? Then wait. Having done all you can, stand still and see my salvation."

You have heard the expression, "The hardest part of faith is the last half hour." I can testify to this over and over from my years in ministry. The most trying period is always right before the answer comes, just before God works his deliverance. That's when we begin to wilt and faint. Suddenly, we're tempted fiercely to make something happen on our own. This can lead us into confusion and plans that are not of God.

Consider the lesson of Saul when he moved ahead of God: "It came to pass, that as soon as (Saul) had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came" (1 Samuel 13:10). Divine direction was just minutes away. Yet Saul couldn't wait.

There are serious implications when we don't wait for God to act. Too often at such times, we charge God with neglect. Saul did this when he impatiently acted on his own. He was saying, in essence, "God has sent me out to do his work. But now he has left me to figure out how to make it all happen. I'm being forced to sit and wait, but surely he wants me to act. Things are spinning out of control. Soon it will be hopeless."

Perhaps this describes your own thinking at times. Like Saul, each of us is commanded to wait on the Lord, to stand still and see him work our deliverance, to trust him in all things so he can direct our path. But when our inner deadline passes, we grow angry at God and strike out on our own. By moving ahead of him we are declaring, "God doesn't care about me. Prayer and waiting don't work. Things only get worse that way. *His word can't be relied on.*"

Yet God has given us the responsibility to prayerfully wait on him. He so desired to hear Saul say, "The Lord keeps his word. I know he speaks to Samuel faithfully. Never once has a word fallen to the ground from that prophet's lips. Now, as the mighty Philistines come marching toward us, I'm not going to panic. God has told me to wait for his direction — and I will. If I die, I'll die trusting God.

"Let my whole army desert. Let every Israelite be a coward. Let God be true and every man a liar! He will send me help. This isn't my war — it is his. The truth is I don't have the slightest idea how to go up against the Philistines. It is all in his hands. I will do exactly as I have been commanded by him, and

that is to wait on his word. He will act in answer to my heart cry."

Troubling circumstances and fiery conditions can bring on confusion. At such times, our impatience begins to reason: "God must not have meant what he said to me. Or maybe the problem is in my ability to hear his voice. Perhaps I heard him wrong in the first place. All I know is that what he told me and what I see developing don't add up."

Saul acted purely on logic and reason, not on trust. Listen to the string of excuses he gave Samuel for moving ahead of God's direction: "Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord; I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering" (1 Samuel 13:11-12). Saul took matters in his own hands, doing what he reasoned was his only option. It ended in sorrow.

This matter of waiting is so important that we find references to it throughout God's Word. Isaiah writes, "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (64:4).

It is telling to compare Saul's impatience to how David waited on the Lord for direction. The Bible offers a compelling description of how God spoke to David, with clear and specific guidance:

"The Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.

"And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer" (2 Samuel 5:22-25).

The cross represents the death of my human will and fleshly ambition. Here is true humility: "Christ humbled himself in death at the cross." Jesus had told his disciples, "My meat, my fulfillment in life, is to do the will of him that sent me" (John 4:34). "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge" (5:30). Simply put, Christ was saying, in essence, "I refuse to take matters into my own hands. I wait to receive every direction from my Father."

Jesus humbled himself, becoming dependent on the Father in all things. John tells us we are to be like him in this way: "As he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Every true follower of Christ has said in his or her heart, "I only want to do the Lord's perfect will." Yet here is exactly where so many of us miss it! We start to desire something that looks good, that sounds logical, that seems perfectly in line with what we think God has for us — but it isn't his will for us. This is one of the biggest traps Christians face: *a good idea that is not from God's mind.*

The most important question we can ask ourselves regarding such things is: "Can my desire survive the cross?" You may pray to see your desire come to pass and even enlist faithful others to intercede for it. Yet are you willing to lay down that desire or plan at the foot of the cross and walk away from it? Can you die to it? When God's plan is revealed, you will have peace. God's ways bring peace and rest.

Let me ask you: Are you willing to say to the Lord, "Maybe it isn't the devil who's stopping me in my pursuit of this. Maybe it's you, Lord. I know that if this is not your will it could hurt me. At the very least, it will derail me from your perfect will and plan for my steps. I desire only your will and your way for my life."

It is when we descend into the death of self-will and ambition that we hear God speak to us. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.... All that are in the graves shall hear his voice" (John 5:25, 28).

Beloved, thousands of Christians get into trouble by hearing "still, small voices" that aren't from God. There is so much confusion among believers today because they haven't died to self-will in order to hear God's true voice. Yes, our Lord does speak to his children. We can only hear his holy, unmistakable voice if we accept by faith that our old independent man is crucified with Christ.

He is looking for total dependency. That means trusting him fully to do the right thing in the right way on our behalf. And it means patiently waiting on him not with anxiety but in a spirit of rest.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass...fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Psalm 37:7-8). The Psalmist offers us this wise counsel: "Don't grow jealous of others who seem successful in their ambitions. They look like they're passing you up while you are not being blessed. But you are not to be anxious about it. Just wait in prayer for rest until God opens the door. Patience is doing a godly work in you. You are becoming strong in the Lord by waiting in faith. Let patience complete its perfect work in you."

Beloved, God's way is not the world's way. And the only way to gain godly experience is to wait patiently on him in faith. This sort of godly experience comes to those in communion with the Lord: "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

Indeed, God equates "walking worthy before him" with joyful patience and longsuffering. "That ye

might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing... strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and *longsuffering with joyfulness*" (Colossians 1:10-11, my italics).

In the meantime, as we wait in faith for him to act, we are to trust he hears the cry of our heart: "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord...that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:10-11). God is greatly moved by our tears and our groaning. He hears my weeping.

Jesus has given us an ironclad promise for these last days. Christ left us a glorious promise to see us through the dark days the world is facing right now. He says to all who pick up their cross and follow him: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

Jesus is saying, in essence, "You stayed true when you were tested by the world. You joyfully waited for me to work things out. Now, while there is confusion all around and the world is being tested, I will keep you from it. You have already proven you'll trust me come what may!"

The shining witnesses for Christ in these last days are going to be a humble people who have proven him faithful. Not only do they proclaim, "God has everything under control," but they have actually let him have control of their lives. And everyone around them has seen it! The beauty of their testimony will draw many to the Lord. And their testimony is this: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Psalm 112:7). Amen!

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