

Sermon Outline - Sunday, October 27, 2013
The Duty of the Saints to Patiently Wait on God in Affliction
Adapted from *the Forgiveness of Sin*, by John Owen

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. (Ps. 130:3-6.)

God alone is the author and creator of the concept of forgiveness and there is none with Him. Neither angel, nor any of the sons or daughters of men have this power. God reserved this power exclusively to himself and his Son. Beloved, we owe no allegiance to any man, but God. We *look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* (Heb. 12:2.)

This God, that grants forgiveness should be feared. (Ps. 130:4.) God's free gift of grace, teaches men to fear to offend him; influences them to serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and engages them to keep His commandments.

The Creature has an Affirmative Duty to Wait on the Creator's Providence. The God that grants forgiveness should be waited on. *I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.* (Ps. 130:5-6.) Three times in two verses we are told we must wait on God. Should the lifeless clay without form wait on the potter? We wait as His creatures, for His gracious presence and the light of His countenance, we being in gross darkness; and for His salvation and deliverance out of the depths of distress and for an answer to prayer.

Waiting is a duty that depends on the distance between the persons concerned in it, namely, he that waiteth (man), and he that is waited on (God). The greater the distance between the parties, the more cogent are the reasons of the duty to wait. Can there be any greater distance considered between the Great Sovereign God of Eternity and fallen man? To gain a better understanding of the distance between the parties we must contemplate all of the works of God. *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him?* (Ps. 8:3-4.)

Behold the universe, the glorious fabric of heaven and earth! How little is it that we know of its beauty, order, design and unlimited boundaries. We know virtually nothing of it. We are confined to this small globe and can only peer out of its haze into the unknown. We are on a single, small grain of sand straining to catch glimpses of an unfathomable ocean. There are a few things we think we know about this vast universe that the Lord created.

- There are roughly 400 billion stars in our own Milky Way Galaxy.
- Some galaxies have up to a 100 trillion stars and some less than our own Milky Way.

- There are between 170 billion and 1 trillion galaxies in the observable universe.
- The observable universe is 13.8 billion light years in all directions.
- There are roughly 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (10 to the 24th power) stars in the observable universe.
- The total universe, not just what is observable, is 150 billion light years across and it is expanding at an accelerated rate.

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. (Ps. 33:6-9.) God can with the same ease and facility with which he made this world, destroy it to its primitive nothing, and he will do just that per 2 Peter 3.

And what are we, poor worms of the earth, an inconsiderable unknown part of the lower series and order of the works of His hands, few in number (7 billion is small, given the context of the wider universe), fading in condition and disregarded (we are hated) by most of our fellow-creatures. We are poor worms of the potter's clay. Should we withdraw ourselves from under God's dealings with us or be weary of waiting for His pleasure? We are nothing. We must recalibrate our understanding of what we are. We talk about the "big picture" ... we contemplate a 30,000 foot view of things to get a proper lay of the land. Yet, we are insanely myopic when talking about the works of God with that understanding. Let us try a billion light years view. We might then get a better understanding of where we are in the relative contemplation of God and our duty to wait on Him.

"Be still, and know that I am God..." (Ps. 46:10.) That is, "wait, and know that I am God." Let there be no more disputings of man. We must be still, we must wait in silence and patience on God.

Shall we refuse to wait on God? Shall we contend with God when He gives us some testing or trial or proving ground we don't want to be in? Shall we harden ourselves against Him and despise Him? Shall we be as the nation of Israel at Kibrothhattaavah (Numbers 11) when they despised the supernatural manna that came to them from the sky and refused to wait on God and complained bitterly that they had no flesh to eat. The Lord sent the quails to them and while it was in their very teeth the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote them with a very great plague.

Shall we hide ourselves from God so as to avoid him? How ruinous and pernicious to the soul such a course would be. Patiently waiting on Him is the soul's only resource. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you **in due time**.* (1 Pet. 5:6.) We must quietly and joyfully wait and submit to God's sovereign will. We must bear patiently his providence without groanings, mumblings, and murmurings. We must be still and accept his chastening. *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?* (Heb. 12:6-7) When the time of waiting is done, and in due time, then, the Lord will exalt you, but not until **His** time has come.

Think how disrespectful it is of us to become impatient with God! *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.* (Ps. 27:14.) *Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.* (Ps. 33:20.) *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.* (Ps. 37:9.) *Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.* (Ps. 37:34.) *I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* (Ps. 40:1.)

Waiting on God is not a theoretical concept. It is a practical duty. Joseph was just 17 years old when he was sold to the Midianites. He waited for 13 long years in exile, slavery and prison to be exalted overseer in Egypt. He waited another 9 long years before he saw his brethren. Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ spent six excruciating hours with His extremities nailed to the cross, slowly bleeding to death before he gave up the Ghost. *...who for the joy that was set before Him (Christ) endured the cross, despising the shame.* (Heb. 12:2.) He joyfully did this work and waited on his Father. We have the blessed souls under the altar in Revelation 6, that cry *...with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* (Rev. 6:10.) They were told to wait (it's not due time yet) and rest a little season until your fellow servants/brethren should likewise be killed and time fulfilled. In Genesis 6 the Lord declared that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, and that the whole earth was corrupt and filled with violence. So, it was worthy of destruction right then and there. But, it took 120 long years for Noah and his family to build the ark. That is a long time to wait when his generation was only getting more wicked and more perverse with every passing day.

The duty to wait on God has three characteristics: 1) Quietness (patience), as opposed to haste and a tumultuous spirit; 2) Diligence, as opposed to spiritual sloth and despondency; and, 3) Expectation and joy as opposed to despair, distrust and other actings of unbelief.

- 1) Quietness and composure of spirit – not a hasty and tumultuous spirit – *The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.* (Lam. 3:26.) That we would have *... the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.* (1 Pet. 3:4.) *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.* (1 Th. 4:11.) This is as opposed to haste of spirit. Haste is the soul's undue lifting up itself, proceeding from a weariness of its condition, to press after an end to its troubles, not according to the conduct of the Spirit of God. *Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in Him: but the just shall live by his faith.* (Hab. 2:4.) We must engage our souls in waiting, in quietness, and silence of heart and spirit. By this conduct the soul is kept humble, satisfied with the sovereign pleasure of God. A true waiting on God is also different than giving way to tumultuous thoughts and disquietness. In a condition of affliction the soul is apt to having many perplexing and tumultuous thoughts, which have no use or advantage. We must exercise self-command to reject them, see them for what they are, and adopt a quiet and submissive spirit to God to wait on Him. It is an essential skill we must learn. *And we know*

that all things (even the waiting) work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28.) We wait on God for a purpose. In Rev. 21:7-8 we tend to focus on verse 8, *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone...* Consider verse 7; *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* We must overcome our impatient, faithless flesh to wait on Him. It is a lack of faith that causes us to be impatient in our duty to wait on God.

2. We must be diligent in opposition to spiritual sloth when it comes to waiting on God. Diligence is an activity of the mind. It is a careful and persistent work or effort. It takes active diligence in the things of God to wait on and trust in Him. David says; *I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. (Ps. 40:1-2.)* We wait on God in a constant readiness to observe the will of God in all His commands. So, how do we be diligent in opposition to spiritual sloth? We are careful and persistent in prayer, meditation, and reading and studying the dispensation of the Word. We are all appointed to this purpose to wait with diligence on God our master. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. (Ps. 123:2.)*

3. We must set the expectation in our own mind and souls from the outset that we are going to wait on God. *My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense; I shall not be moved. (Ps. 62:5-6.)* Though darkness may, for a time, be troublesome, and continue longer than a soul would like, the righteous have a heavenly expectation that the morning has its appointed time of return, beyond which time it will not tarry; therefore they look out for its appearance.

We must accept his providential dealings with us and wait for his deliverance not with grim faces and reluctance but with joy. *Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee...Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart... (Deut. 28:45.)*

We also have a duty to help and encourage one another in waiting on God. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. (Isa. 35:3-4.)* Paul says; *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. (1 Th 5:14.)* James reminds us of the goal of this perfect work; *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting (or lacking) nothing. (James 1:3-4.)* I love you all. Amen.