

Waiting On God

By David Sheats

Published by NTChurchSource.com

"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" (Isaiah 40:31 NKJV).

The discipline of waiting on God in all things is perhaps one of the most demanding exercises of the soul that we will ever experience. Man is very capable, and the natural tendency in most of us is to move in our capability to try to do the things of God. Yet if we want to see fruit to the glory of God in our lives and know His grace in all things, we must not move in our capability, but only according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This is easy to say, but another matter to experience. Is it possible? Yes, it is possible for all of us to be led by the Spirit in all things at all times, but for this to become a reality in all of our lives, we must learn to wait on God.

The term "waiting on God" may mean different things to us. If we search the Scriptures, we find it used most often in the book of Psalms. This is not surprising if we consider that the book of Psalms is mainly a book of prayer. We find many expressions there of the heart of a man bowed low in the presence of God, utterly dependent on God to do what only He can do. This is the heart attitude of one who is truly waiting on God. As we bow before God, possibly not even with a petition, but just being silent before our Maker, it puts us in our rightful place before God so that God can speak and deal as He chooses.

To be still in the presence of God is not a small thing. There are so many things to hinder the communion that God--and we--desire. The reasoning of the natural mind, the emotions of worry and fear, and an unbelieving heart are probably at the top of the list. Where these control us, communion with God by the Spirit will escape us, leaving us unsatisfied in our relationship with God and unfruitful in His kingdom. Jesus came so that we might bear much fruit, eternal fruit, and He has made full provision in Himself to bring this about. The key to fulfilling this purpose is knowing in experience that apart from Him we can do nothing.

In the New Covenant, everything is built around an expanding revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The revealing of the person of Christ is the foundation of the church and everything that God is doing in this hour. We can think about this revealing in three ways, namely 1) The revealing of Christ to us (who He is), 2) The revealing of Christ in us (the Word made flesh), and 3) The revealing of Christ through us (to others). These are closely related yet different aspects of the revealing of Christ for the purpose and glory of God. As we look to God, our focus is on these areas expanding in our vision and experience. As they do, our union with Christ and His expression through us will grow and mature. This is the goal of waiting on God: that we will experience Christ in a fuller measure, and that He will be lifted up in and through our lives.

We are utterly dependent on God for this revelation. When Peter declared with confidence who Jesus was, Jesus said that flesh and blood did not reveal this to Peter, but His Father in heaven (see Matthew 16:17). Many men today study the scriptures diligently, seeking to understand the things of God with their natural ability, but Paul declares clearly that the things of God can only be known by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). The truth of this should direct our walk and raise the importance of waiting on God to the highest level. It is as we wait on God that we will be able to discern the mind of the Spirit. It is here that we give God the opportunity to deal with our confidence in the flesh. It is here that the Spirit

can expand our revelation of Jesus in all things, that we may move as spiritual men, spreading abroad the fragrance of who He is, not who we are. Yes, it is demanding, but it is absolutely necessary if we are going to mature in our relationship with Christ and fulfill our high calling as sons of God. May the Lord show us the importance of giving ourselves diligently to this high calling so that we may enter fully into all the riches of Christ for the glory of God.

Revealing Christ to Us

When we begin to walk with God, it takes a miracle for Christ to be changed from a historical figure with no impact on our lives, to His rightful place as Lord of our lives. It does not come by just studying the Bible or by trying to believe. No matter how much we may desire spiritual reality, unless Jesus opens the "eyes of our heart" (our spiritual eyes), we will remain blind to the things of the Spirit and the kingdom of God. The Father is willing to reveal Christ to us, but the key question is, am I willing to wait upon God for Him to do so? Am I hungry and thirsty enough to take time with God so that He can open my spiritual eyes? The riches of God are hidden from the man or woman that does not value them. But *"blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled"* (Matthew 5:6).

There is a price for everything. Christ has paid the price of sin, but there is also a price for us. The price we pay is nothing in comparison to what Christ has already done, but it is still a price. I believe that part of the price we must pay to know reality in spiritual things is quality time alone with God. Waiting on God takes time. That is a simple and obvious statement, but what else do we have but the time God has given us? We give ourselves to things that have value in our eyes. If we allow other things to rob God of our time and attention (purposefully or just through neglect), what does this reveal about our hearts? Do we want the reality of God in our lives? Do we want Christ to be our Lord? Do we want to know Him as Paul did? This is where we must do business with God. We cannot change our own hearts, but if we will not approach God in sincerity and take time with Him, how can we expect God to change our hearts?

As we come, a proper attitude of heart is essential. We come in deep humility before God, asking Him to open the eyes of our heart that we might see clearly. After Jesus had healed the blind man, the Pharisees were offended. They asked Jesus, *"Are we blind also?"* Jesus said to them, *"If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains"* (John 9:41). The Pharisees were filled with pride; they would not humble themselves and ask Jesus to help them. Humility is an essential key to an initial and continuing revelation of Jesus Christ. If we have no need, Jesus cannot meet our need. If we are among those who see our need, let us be assured that Jesus will meet the need in our lives as we humble ourselves in His presence. Blessed are those who have a need.

When Jesus was here upon the earth, one central question followed Him wherever He went: Who is this man? Most did not see who He was. They had concepts in their mind of what the Messiah would be like and what he would do, and Jesus did not fit those concepts. The religious leaders had a structure that suited them. They liked their position and authority, and when Jesus challenged its foundation, they reacted violently to protect themselves. They were so ensnared by sin and distorted in their minds that when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, they responded with indescribable rage and began plotting to kill both Lazarus and Jesus. These men did not know their day of visitation. Lest we be too harsh in our condemnation of them, do we realize that we could be just as blind today? If we do not consider this possible, it may be that we are already there.

So, who is Jesus? He was God, revealed in human form. Jesus said that He and the Father were one. He never refused worship by one who came in sincerity, recognizing who He was. Paul said, *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:15-18).

Only the Holy Spirit can open our eyes to the significance of who Christ is. Faith must have this revelation as its foundation, for Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. All false religion goes wrong on question of who Christ is. A true relationship with God is based on a true revelation of Christ, for *"there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). He Himself said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). Christ is the pivotal point in creation and in the plan of God for man. So we must have a clear revelation of who Christ is, and only the Holy Spirit can give us that revelation. He is faithful to do so for any man or woman who comes in sincerity before God to ask. "Ask and you shall receive" is the promise. Are we willing to ask until we receive?

A clear revelation of Jesus includes a revelation of His authority. *"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen"* (Matthew 28:18-20). We must see that all authority has been given to Christ and He has never given it away. If we move in union with Him, we move in His authority. If we move outside of this union, we move on our own authority and outside of what God is doing. To move in union with Christ continually in all things, properly recognizing His authority and keeping ourselves under His authority, we must continually wait on Him.

If we are abiding in Christ, we will never stop seeing more of who Christ is, for He is God. There are no limits in God, and although we can do nothing in ourselves, God has made full provision for us. God's provision is Himself and what He will do as He indwells us by the Spirit. We cannot rely on natural provision, and we must avail ourselves of God's provision. Consider carefully the words of our Lord just before He went to Calvary. They are full of direction.

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.' Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you'" (John 14:15-26).

Revealing Christ in Us

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus" (Galatians 1:15-17).

It is not enough that we see who Christ is. That is the foundation, and we begin there, but God wants to go on to reveal Christ *in* us. This is a far greater matter, for it means that the word of God must actually become flesh in us, as it was in Christ. God is looking for men and women willing to have Christ formed in them by faith. We are to be living epistles, known and read by all men. When others see us, they should see Christ. Most of us know this *should* be true, but the question is, how will it take place? Waiting on God is an essential part of this.

If we consider the scripture from John 14 quoted above, we find an essential truth to help us. Judas asked Jesus how He would reveal Himself to the disciples and not to the world. Jesus answered that He would reveal Himself by coming to abide within, making His home in the believer's heart. What a revelation! We are not trying to comprehend a historic Christ, but experiencing a risen Christ in intimate fellowship. This is a union that has no equal known to mankind. And what is the condition? *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word."* Christ being revealed in us, then, has two essential conditions: love and obedience.

When Paul first sensed the call of God upon his life, notice what he did (or did not do). *"I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood."* Let us not pass over this lightly. So many times, the first thing we do is to confer with others. But can we communicate with God? Is He able to speak to us individually? Of course communion with God is much more demanding than going to talk with another believer. To hear God we must spend time with God. We must quiet our hearts in His presence. We can hide things from man, but not from God. Yet the Holy Spirit is gentle, and does not force Himself upon us. To experience the depths and riches of God's love, we must open ourselves to God without reservation. The Holy Spirit searches every motive, plumbs the depth of the heart, and leaves no stone unturned. His work is to prepare the bride of Christ. At the end, the bride will be pure, without spot or wrinkle, ready to be married to Christ for all eternity.

To know the reality of union with God, to be one with Him and with each other, even as He is one, we must take time to commune with God in the secret place. All hindrances must be left outside, for this is where we have intercourse with God. It is an intimate place, and many things can hinder. If the motivation of our relationship is love, and if we are willing to obey when God sheds light, then hindrances will be dealt with, and the Holy Spirit will lead us into the reality of all that Christ is. As the character of Christ is formed in us through obedience, we will be brought step by step to greater maturity, and God will reveal more of Christ to us.

If the revelation of Christ does not expand as we desire it to, one reason may be that our vessel (our body and mind) has not been prepared. God can only reveal what we are prepared to receive. For our capacity to increase, we must grow. The Holy Spirit leads us to the next step, but if we do not take that step, how will we take the step beyond? Will God overlook anything in our lives? His love will not allow Him to do so, no matter how small a matter may seem to us. In the quiet place the Holy Spirit disciplines us. He puts His finger on what must be dealt with if we are to share in His holiness. Are we open to His dealing? Are we hungry enough to lay aside good but unnecessary things in order to have time for God?

Another important truth relating to our growth is that the Holy Spirit is the One who must lead the way. We cannot engineer our own growth in God through our reasoning. Only the Holy Spirit (God) knows the depth of our hearts and what needs to be affected in our lives. Our place is to respond to Him. When we realize this, we see again the importance of waiting on God. If we move on our own, we will likely be wrong in our evaluation of what action we need to take. The human mind is prone to overlook the real issues, make excuses, and concentrate on things that have little or no meaning to God.

Paul wrote to the Colossians with strong encouragement to "hold fast to the Head," and he addresses this subject: *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using-- according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh"* (Colossians 2:16-23).

To read a book is easy. We can pick and choose what we want. To read the Bible apart from really waiting on God is nearly as easy, because we can explain away what we do not like. To face another spiritual person for whom we have respect is more demanding, because we must interact and be ready to answer for ourselves. But to face God honestly and submit to His discipline is the most demanding of all. It is easy to run from this and hide behind excuses. But if we do, we are the ones who lose. We must not run from this encounter with God. Let us consider again the exhortation found in Hebrews:

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.'

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:3-11).

Revealing Christ Through Us

If we see who Christ is, we have a message. The message is Jesus. If Christ is being formed in us, the life we are living is His life, and men can see Christ before we even speak a word. But there is more, for in this hour God is using men to build His church and proclaim the truth of who He is. Yet even if we have a message and are prepared to take the message to others, for our labor to be effective and approved by God, we must still wait on God to move in union with Him in all things. We must go out in the order of God, the wisdom of God, and the timing of God. To do this, we must be led by the Spirit in all things. And to know the leading of the Spirit, we must be found continually waiting on God for direction.

Paul speaks boldly on the matter of building in God's order: *"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire"* (1 Corinthians 3:9-15).

It is easy to try to build in our own wisdom. As we have mentioned, man is very capable. We can reason based on our natural ability and what we see can be done, and come up with many things that seem good. We may implement our ideas, and the results may seem good. But the question is this: What does God think? If we want to see the building stand in the time of testing, we must be doing the will of God (see Matthew 7:21-27). This is not so easy. It takes time before God to let our thoughts be tested. It takes revelation to our hearts to see the purpose of God clearly. Do we see the importance of building according to God's plan? If we do, we should also see the urgency of waiting on God in order to know with certainty that we are building on the right foundation in the order of God. We dare not miss the way, for these are eternal matters.

We do not have space here even to begin expounding on the plan of God, but if we see in some measure who Christ is, and if we are abiding in Him, we cannot help but see something of the plan of God in Christ Jesus for all of us together. Of particular note in our subject is the attitude of Paul as he lays out the plan of God to the Ephesians. Although Paul is a "wise master builder," and he sees clearly into the purpose of God in Christ Jesus, he does not depend on what he sees or on his ability to impart what he sees. We find him waiting on God in prayer for the Ephesian believers, knowing that only God can reveal the riches of His plan:

"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:15-21).

This same attitude must be found not just in those who labor as builders in the church, but in every member and in every relationship. It is easy to learn a few truths, memorize a few Bible verses, and then try to break into people's lives with the belief that we can help them. Often we do more damage than good in our efforts to be helpful. We may see real needs, but the question is this: Do we have the wisdom of God to meet the need, and is God leading us to meet the need? We must wait on God, allowing Him to show us the root need and then His wisdom to really meet the need. This takes time before God with an ear to hear Him, and a life prepared to do the will of God.

Not only do we need the wisdom of God, we also need His timing. Naturally, we tend to want things done quickly, especially in other people's lives. But if we step back and look at history, how long did God wait before Christ came to earth? How long did Abraham have to wait until he received the son of promise? For how long did God train Moses in the wilderness? God has a perfect time for everything, and it takes God-built patience to wait for His time in all things. God is not in a hurry like we often are. He is building for eternity, and He will not fail. So how can we always move in God's timing? Only by abiding in Jesus and being led by the Spirit; only as every emotion is under His control; and only as every thought is brought captive to Christ. These are not small matters, and they can happen only as we learn what it means to wait upon God in all things.

The Renewing of the Mind

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:1-3).

Of all the parts of the body, the mind is the most important. Paul points it out as the focus for the renewal of the whole man. If our thoughts cannot be under the control of the Holy Spirit, how can we expect the rest of our body to be at God's disposal? Changing the way we think about something is not easy. Seeing all things from God's perspective is not a small thing. This renewal of our minds is not accomplished in a moment, but only as we let God build the revelation of Himself in us. It all takes time, and this is where we must be willing to wait upon God. If our minds are constantly preoccupied with other things, how will God be able to reveal to us His plan and purpose in Christ Jesus?

To be able to think clearly in God, we must begin with quiet hearts. If we are troubled and not trusting God in all things, we likely will be led astray in our thinking. As we wait upon God in prayer, our hearts can be stilled in His presence. *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:6-8).*

If we are unexercised in this secret place with God, we may find it very difficult to be still. A thousand and one thoughts seem to crowd in and push God out. We must deal with them one by one. As each issue comes before us, we must bring it before the Lord: "Am I willing to leave this in God's hands? Do I really believe He is God and knows all things? Can I trust Him to work all things for His glory and my best good?" This is where we find out if God is really God to us. We may know He is God, but is

He *my* God? Is Jesus *my* Lord? The Lord will not fail us if we come diligently before Him day by day. It may take more time than we first thought, but the fruit will come, as surely as God is God. *"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly"* (Matthew 6:6).

When truth begins to dawn upon our souls, and we start to see the implications of what God is revealing to us, our first reaction may be one of disbelief. "Could this really be true? Could I have been so wrong? What will I do about this or that?" Consider what the multitude had to deal with when Peter told them they had crucified the Christ. The act was done, and they could not go back. As the Holy Spirit convicted them of their sin, they cried out, "What shall we do?" Peter's answer was one that should bring hope to our hearts as well. *"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call'"* (Acts 2:38-39).

Let God expand the truth in this familiar scripture to us. Because Jesus paid the price of our sin, He can offer us a place of repentance. To repent is to turn from our natural thinking and the actions that resulted from that thinking, to God and all that He is. The issue before us may not seem as monumental as crucifying the Christ, but sin can be defined as any movement in our lives separate from God. Self-effort does not exist when Jesus is Lord. God's provision is Himself, the Holy Spirit who is God. If God has never come to indwell us as on the day of Pentecost, then our first step is to receive Him. But after God has come to abide, it does not necessarily follow that every wrong concept has been dealt with or that we have fully obeyed Jesus in all things. In that secret place before God, He puts His finger on anything that hinders our relationship with Him, and as we repent from what God shows us, the relationship is cleared and the Holy Spirit has His way, continuing to reveal Christ in us.

Consider how God dealt with the churches in the book of Revelation. To six out of seven of them, we find words similar to these: *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent"* (Revelation 3:19). The chastening of God is an evidence of His love. It is not for the purpose of putting us out, but of bringing us into a greater fellowship with God. The danger is that either we will run from this quiet place before God so that we don't have to deal with Him, or that when God does deal, we will argue and excuse ourselves, and not respond to Him. Either response will leave us outside the grace of God and becoming hardened, perhaps eventually to the point that we are no longer sensitive to the wooing of the Holy Spirit. May none of us be found in that place!

Once again, why should we spend time with God? There is one simple answer: we want to spend time with God because we love Him. There should be a longing within the heart of every child of God to draw away to the secret place with God. There we commune as friend with friend. There I may lay my head upon the bosom of Christ, even as John did. There I know a place of acceptance before God in Christ our Lord. There I will be one with God, my whole life lived out before Him in confidence. This is a place not to be feared but desired. What a wonderful privilege God has granted to us! Let the Lord open our eyes to see the glory of this new life with Him.

The Early Believers

In the beginning we said that the term "waiting on God" was found mostly in the Old Testament and especially in the book of Psalms. What about the New Testament? Did the early church spend time waiting on God? If we look past the term "waiting on God" and see that it is expressed in various ways, we will see that the early Christians gave themselves to this all-important matter.

The first place that stands out is the command of Jesus before He departed. *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, which,"* He said, *"you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now"* (Acts 1:4-5). In obedience to this command, the disciples gathered in the upper room for about 40 days, waiting on the Lord. We do not have a record of all that happened during those days, but we may surmise that they spent time in prayer, in searching the scriptures, in fellowship one with another, and in some of the basic needs of life (eating and sleeping). I would imagine they spent much time recounting to one another what Jesus said to them before He went to the cross, pondering over the meaning of His many words. The disciples who met Him on the Emmaus road must have shared all that Jesus spoke to them during that time. But the whole attitude that under-girded their time was "waiting for the Promise," and this finds its highest expression in waiting silently in prayer before the Lord. Prayer is two-way communication. There is a time of interceding, of laying our petitions before the throne, and there is a time of listening. In general, our time of listening should be much greater than our time of speaking. We are dealing with God, and surely with Him we must be "quick to listen and slow to speak."

We may have the idea that after the Holy Spirit came, the time of waiting was over and now all that was required was to move in obedience. It is true that the Holy Spirit came one time, and that waiting never needs to be repeated again, for He has come to abide. But just because the Holy Spirit has come does not mean that we do not need to wait on God. Notice the account immediately following the day of Pentecost: *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). *"Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour"* (Acts 3:1). The whole church was giving itself to prayer. Peter and John went to pray in the middle of the afternoon. Prayer was central in the life of the early believers.

What were they waiting for, if the Holy Spirit had already come to abide? I believe one thing they waited on the Lord for was to grasp the full implications of what had happened on the day of Pentecost. This was an entirely new event, and it was not possible that they should comprehend immediately all that had happened. God had come to abide. Christ now dwelt within by the Holy Spirit. God was bringing people together in a oneness that was not possible before this time. These and many more things required revelation from God for understanding. If we read Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-21 and 3:14-20 in this light, I think we begin to see that only as we wait upon the Lord in prayer will we begin to comprehend the spiritual realities that have been made ours in our union with Christ Jesus. Paul knew that even though he was imparting all God had given him through ministry to others, he was on his knees in prayer because only God could reveal the truth of what he taught to the hearts and minds of believers.

Consider one more account from Acts 10: the visitation of the Holy Spirit on the household of Cornelius. The account begins with both Cornelius and Peter giving themselves to prayer. Cornelius did not know what he needed, and Peter did not know how his thinking needed to be changed. But God knew both, and in that place of prayer God spoke to each of them and initiated the events that followed. Can we learn something of the ways of God from this account? Cornelius was hungry for God, and his testimony was that "he prayed to God always." Peter was very active in the work God had called him to do, but even as a meal was being prepared, Peter was giving himself to prayer. May the Lord apply these things to our hearts in our situations.

God's Provision--Our Responsibility

God has made full provision in Himself to meet every need in our lives and enable us to fulfill every responsibility that we face. Not only does He enable us to meet every demand, He enables us to meet them triumphantly in victory. He says that He has given us His joy, and that we can participate in His glory! Even when God is changing us, He changes us "from glory to glory." This is a great salvation that brings us into full fellowship with God and seats us in "heavenly places with Christ." These and so much more are the promises of God, but the question is: how do we partake of these things? How are they made real in our lives? So often we read the promises but never experience the reality. God wants us to experience the reality and so do we. What is the key?

Consider the promises of God in this scripture: *"But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more'"* (Hebrews 10:15-17). Is this not full provision? God says that He will write His word in our hearts and minds, and He will not remember our sins and lawless deeds of the past. This promise is staggering! What more could we want? But the question that comes to us again is "How shall these things be?" Is everything automatic because we have believed in Jesus?

Let us consider the heart as the whole inner person. We cannot get at the depths of our own hearts. This takes the miracle working of God. If I recognize a lack in my heart (my inner person), is not my first responsibility to come diligently before God, waiting upon Him to work in my heart? God has made a promise, and I wait upon Him to do what only He can do. I turn away from all self-effort and cast myself utterly upon God. The "eyes of my heart" are fixed on Jesus even as the eyes of a servant are fixed on his master. We do not know how God works in the heart, but we know He is the only one who can do it. Our responsibility is to come before Him in faith. We are commanded, *"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). How can we do this? Only by continually waiting on God in all things, quieting our hearts in His presence, and allowing Him to fill us with all that He is.

What about our minds? Will God write His word on our minds if we do not look to Him? God is faithful to fulfill His promise, but our part is to look to Him and believe He will do it. If our minds are set on other things, how will God write His word there? If He does not have our attention, how can He write His word, and how will we recognize that it is God? *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* (Revelation 3:6). Our responsibility is to give God our ear. He will fulfill His promise and write His word on our minds. In that word is grace full of direction, wisdom, and knowledge. We need all of these to move under the direction of the Holy Spirit and in union with God.

Consider one more scripture: *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:12-13). This is a wonderful promise of God that should leave us resting in Him. God is working even before we begin to wait on Him, for He is the one wooing us to wait. Can we hear that wooing? But again notice our responsibility. We must obey, and we can only obey in faith if we are hearing God. The beginning point for us is waiting on God. God promises to write His word on our hearts and minds if we wait on Him to do so. Is this not God working within us "to will and to do for His good pleasure"? As we wait on Him, Jesus authors the word of God in our hearts and minds. He *originates* the word of God within us, and this is what we live by. This is the foundation of faith. As we respond in faith, fruit to the glory of God will follow. Are we willing to take the first step? "Be still and know

that I am God." From this place, rivers of living water will flow out of our hearts.

While we focus on the importance of spending quality time in the presence of God, let us also realize that "waiting on God" is not only experienced there. If we see how utterly dependent we are on God in the secret place, it will become the "springboard" from which the rest of our lives are lived out. Conversely, we cannot live the rest of our lives depending on our own abilities and then expect to come into the presence of God with quiet hearts, ready to listen to God and hear His word. We should be "waiting on God" in our entire lives--our thinking, our attitudes and our decisions, in public and in private. He is our life. We are called to live His life, not our own.

The Full Provision of God

Any time we look at a particular area of our relationship with God, we must always relate it back to everything else. God has made full provision in the church for the full revelation of Jesus Christ. Waiting on God is not a substitute for that provision, but it is the manner of life that is required for all other provisions to benefit.

For example, consider God's provision in ministry. We are told very clearly what it is for. *"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love"* (Ephesians 4:11-16).

This is God's provision for our growth in Christ. What is necessary for us to benefit fully from God's provision? As the ministry of Christ comes to us through God's chosen vessels, we must take it back before God until we partake of the nourishment in our own hearts. Often we do not comprehend immediately what God has said, or its application in our lives. It can take time for the word to become real to us, or for us to see how to respond to God. When the word of God comes to us, if we do not see how to obey or respond, how will the word benefit us? How will it be "made flesh" in us? Thus, waiting upon God is not a substitute for His provision of ministry, but it is the essential element for us to benefit from that ministry.

Or consider God's provision in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. *"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills"* (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

These gifts of the Spirit are part of God's provision enabling us to move as spiritual members of the body of Christ. We cannot do without them. But as with the gifts of ministry, for us to receive full benefit, we must be able to recognize how God is speaking to us so that we can respond in faith. If we

hear a word of prophecy, the danger is that we will only be impressed that God has spoken. We may be thankful that God spoke, but do we know what to do with the word? Do we see its application in our lives? Until we eat of the word, it will not nourish us. Each time we are fed by the word, we must wait upon God, letting Him expand its meaning in our hearts, shed light on our pathway, and reveal the things of Christ to us in a deeper way.

"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-5). "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

There is a great building going on. We are being built together as a habitation of God in the Spirit. This building not made with hands, not built out of wood and stone, is an eternal building, unseen by the natural man and comprehended only by the Spirit. It is the only building that will last forever. Because of what Christ has done, we have the privilege of being built into this house. According the grace of God given to every believer (Ephesians 4:7, Romans 12:3), we also have the privilege of building in this house. To enter into either function, we must have spiritual eyes to see and spiritual ears to hear. Jesus paid the price so that God the Holy Spirit could come within each one and make this building, the church, a reality.

"But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

Brethren, what riches God wants to reveal to us! What glories exist that we have yet not seen! What love there is that we have not yet experienced! May our hearts be stirred to give ourselves to waiting upon God. May everything else fade from our vision, and may our whole lives be taken up with this one thing--waiting upon God for the revelation of Jesus Christ. He will not disappoint us. *"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."* Teach us, Lord, to wait on You.