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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday Afternoon, October 30. 1983

Lesson. Isaiah 6. & Lamentations 3. vv.22-41.

Text. John 5. vv.2-4.

The whole subject is of exquisite beauty, attraction and supreme encouragement to every poor sinner who recognises the need of divine mercy and comes under the term of impotent, helpless. In the Scriptures we have many words of grace concerning the purposes of God in the waiting interim of His dear people, and for their encouragement He says that waiting for Him can never be negative. It is always a positive term. You will never find in the Bible when the Lord is speaking by one of the prophets or Himself, where the term waiting is futile, of no value or importance. Take the word that He waits to be gracious, and "therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you." If we look at the other side of the subject He says, "Blessed are all they that wait for him." So He waits to be gracious. It is His purpose to wait to confer His blessings on His people, and this wondrous word of profound glory rests on this blessedness concerning all those who are truly waiting for Him. So we have in this wonderful narrative by St John concerning Bethesda and all connected with the wonderful scene, a sheep gate, a pool, and a colonnade, five porches. If we equate this with the realm of the Spirit, how wonderful it is to be among those waiting in the colonnade, for it always strikes a chord in the hearts of gracious people; waiting for the moving of the waters. Certainly there was a miracle performed by the angel. The water in the pool was moved, agitated; there was activity in it, and the first one helped down received benefit. The pool, as Kent says in his hymn, leads our minds to the gospel, the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Many in the Sanctuaries where the Lord is truly worshipped are in that position, waiting for various reasons for the moving of the water; a manifestation of a measure of Pentecostal unction and divine power; almighty, sovereign, efficacious power to be applied

in the glorious gospel of our blessed God, and for the power to permeate your spirit and descend on and envelop and fill you with the same blessed Spirit. It is wonderful to feel the descent of the immortal Dove; an effusion of the Holy Ghost in preacher and people.

To give a classical illustration of this in the New Testament, do you judge when the waters were moved when Peter preached his monumental sermon following the Pentecostal anointing and the Day of Pentecost? There were three thousand souls added to the Church on that day - the moving of the water. Wherever the Lord has faithful standard bearers, God-ordained ministers there will be at a certain season, not all time, a particular, especial moving of the water. There will be an effusion of divine power and unction come to your heart and effect something. It will affect you, and effect it, bring it to pass. So great will be the power that your poor sin-sick soul will be healed; you will receive the forgiveness of sins and you will go out singing for joy, dancing and making merry, as it is in the parable. Your exercise will be brought to fruition. It will give a leading in your heart that will be brought to a sacred issue, and souls will be born again of the Spirit. The waters are moved. Some enemies will have all the enmity of their heart slain, and the Lord will fill their hearts with love and turn an enemy to a friend and enmity to amity. This is where the waters are moved. These are all blessed effects. There will be more of a plenary effect when the whole Church of God will be in that condition measurably, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." One accord; sweet, holy, blessed, glorious, God-honouring, soul-edifying unanimity in Christ. The waters are moved. Another effect is as when Peter was in prison, "but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." There is the moving of the waters, the Holy Spirit's power, and you will feel spiritually animated, enlivened, activated; not in a lethargic state; your whole being moved, your spirit activated and all the sweet graces of the Spirit in lively, efficacious exercise. I would like to put it to you in this way as a people exercised and godly. You are to anticipate and wait for the moving of the water. It is a sweet thing. I understand you are thinking of Believer's Baptism, and you may say - I do not know - "It is not for me. I am too old." I

will answer you and say, when the Lord moves the waters He will move in two ways; spiritually in the gospel, and in your soul and you will walk in it. Willingly and joyfully you will walk in it before you do it externally. Do you understand? You will pass through the holy ordinance in spirit with joy, liberty, anticipation before you come to the actual ceremony. That is the beauty of being made willing: you have done it in spirit. O believing, waiting soul, believe by the Holy Ghost so freely given to you, that there will be the moving of the waters. There will be power, unction, liberty; sovereign, efficacious power to affect you in the public ordinance of the ministry of the gospel of redemption and to quicken the dead. There will be those the Lord loves quickened into divine life. I wish if the Lord will grant me the joy, to see a little more of this before He takes me Home.

Let us take another step to cite the precious word, waiting. If we are able to analyse the meaning of it, how is waiting produced? It is clear that the divine mercy of God, His love and grace flowing into your soul will produce a waiting spirit. The term wait means to stay in expectation. There is no despair there; no unbelief in it. There is living faith, vital, living hope and love. All three graces are in waiting. You will know what it is to feel the power of God in your soul. The Lord has given you an expectation by His promise. You will know He has encouraged you by His mercy and goodness and will not say you Nay. This is contrary to His character. He has said, "Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." and you will wait. To give a demonstration of this, say the Lord brings to your view of faith this Scripture; "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed." You will wait patiently for the good that is coming. "Praise waiteth for thee." Praise is as it were congealed in my breast, waiting for the time when it will expand and be in exercise. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion." This is very sweet. How do you think the preacher felt in the depths of despair when he read concerning the man with the lost sheep? "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he

cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." Do you think we felt to be in despair? No. We felt basically, after a period of trial unknown to us God would perfectly fulfil the word, and He has done. O the waiting time, the agony of it all! Sometimes the waiting time is sweet. You realise the Lord will give you something that is precious. People may talk of this, that or the other. You feel a sweet confidence in the Lord, waiting for something precious, and you will not be disappointed. I have the authority of Heaven and spiritual experience of the Lord's faithfulness in performing His promise. What you will have to pass through in waiting God only knows. He will sustain you, uphold you, and on occasions come and renew His Covenant with you. It is not a matter of beating the air and no foundation. There is a good foundation, and the Lord will exercise faith and you will believe it. With all the temptations of the adversary you will think of this. You believe what He has spoken He is able to perform, and He must perform, or what would He do with His great Name? And hope expects it. Hope is a wonderful thing. Really with sweet hope in your soul you will spend some of the sweetest moments and hours in expectation. He exercises love to Himself; His love shed abroad in your heart. And how you will love that which the Lord has set before you in expectation! So you wait. Blessed waiting: it is never in vain. You will never be disappointed if God gives waiting in relation to precious souls in the House of God; waiting for pardon, peace, for your credentials; to see matters cleared in relation to salvation. It will never be in vain. "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." You will never wait in vain.

The poor souls waiting in the porches were a sorry sight, for they were as we know, impotent folk, powerless; they could not do for themselves. Aren't you like that? Do you feel painfully your impotence? When you see the divine economy and purpose of God it is that He should have all the glory. Omnipotence meets impotence: that is how it works out. If we could claim anything in our own strength and power we should praise ourselves and take the honour of it. But we are impotent. The omnipotent, great God meets the case. You will feel increasingly impotent. Poor,

impotent folk, blind. They needed their sight restored. I do not believe in the whole of our meditation together that they were all blind spiritually. They were in trouble, and you may feel to be so. "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known." You may feel it in your soul. You feel to be in the dark and cannot see. You cannot see your way, or see your evidences clear. You cannot see the way God would have you take. You are in the dark concerning your path and in providence. It is as though you are groping in the dark; blind.

Waiting; halt, crippled. Sin has crippled us severely. We cannot move about; we are dependent on others. When the Lord gave Jacob faith and liberty to wrestle with Him - and he knew He was a divine Person - He gave great exercise of faith and grace to wrestle with Him until he prevailed, and he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," and the Lord blessed him there. He changed his name to Israel, a prince, and He touched the hollow of his thigh so it was out of joint. So Jacob halted upon his thigh: he was lame to his death, and God will do this. He will not let you have the glory. He has the glory. This is divine teaching; painful to the flesh, profitable to the soul. Do you meet many lame people these days in the spiritual sense? or do they know and do everything? The Lord's people are lame. He makes us lame. We have to depend on Him, to come up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved. It is good to have a poor soul that is lame. You cannot stride along with ordinary professors of the day in Modernism. You will fit in with the people of God who feel their lameness. I often feel as a lame preacher, and you feel as lame hearers. I cannot preach unless I lean on my Beloved. Are you like that in prayer?

And they were withered: a strange condition where all the muscles are atrophied, and shrink almost to nothingness. You will need the Lord to come and do all for you. Sometimes your prospects and hopes seem withered. You are waiting. I was looking at Toplady, 293.

"Disheartened with waiting so long,"

Yes, that is part of it.

"I sink at Thy feet with my load;
All plaintive I pour out my song,
And stretch forth my hands unto God."

I wonder what he will say before he gets to the end of the hymn?

"Yet, Lord, if Thy love has designed
No covenant blessing for me,
Ah! tell me, how is it I find
Some sweetness in waiting for Thee?"

There you are. "how is it I find
Some sweetness in waiting for Thee?"

You will find some sweetness.

"Almighty to rescue Thou art,
Thy grace is immortal and free;
Lord, succour and comfort my heart,
And make me live wholly to Thee."

We have the two poles.

"Disheartened with waiting so long,
I sink at Thy feet with my load."

And the other pole,

"Yet, Lord, if Thy love has designed
No covenant blessing for me,
Ah! tell me, how is it I find
Some sweetness in waiting for Thee?"

Take it home, 293. It is all there. How beautifully Toplady speaks to ~~his~~ souls, and he must have been in the same himself.

To go on to the man who waited for thirty-eight years - that is a long time - thirty-eight years on his bed, and it was a bed of chastening. We know by what the Lord said when He healed him. "Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." It was a long time to wait, but it was not in vain. When the Lord came, full of compassion, and said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" he made a confession. "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." He had no friend. He had an eternal Friend. Some others had friends to get them in. I like the words in the hymn, "Friend of the friendless and the faint." There are some who feel they have no friend, but he had a Friend in Jesus. "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." You might say it is hopeless; give it all up. No. With all your things; children, exercises, trials, dilemmas, difficulties you wait on. You wait, my friends, with a blessed spirit of expectation. You will never wait in vain. Blessed be God.