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Waiting and Hoping in the Lord

Sermon preached by Mr J W Walder at Galeed Chapel Brighton on 22nd November 1989

“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.”

Lamentations 3:25-6

These precious words are doubtless applicable to every waiting, seeking soul, but there is a particular setting in which they are found in this book, so that they are especially applicable unto those souls who are longing for a restoration to former favours, liberty and blessings. They look back with remembrance upon these seasons sometimes, with earnest desire that the Lord would return and renew those former blessings and times of liberty and peace in the soul.

The days of Jeremiah were sorrowful days. He was the weeping prophet. At that season the people of God, the exercised of Israel, were in days of captivity, apprehension, temptation and distress. They were not like some of their former days, and they longed that the Lord would graciously restore unto them their former spirituality, that they might walk in the paths of peace and love which they had formerly enjoyed. It was a time of captivity, trials, temptation and sins, and yet it was according to the will of God. Those who understood these things were found diligently and earnestly looking unto the Lord and seeking him. These words are exceedingly encouraging unto those souls who, in some degree or measure, are intensely longing and waiting for the Lord to restore their souls and to bless them with renewing and fresh manifestations of his mercy, love and salvation.

‘The Lord is good unto them that wait for him.’ If we can honestly come within the bounds of this experience, and are pleading with the God of all mercy and grace, and are in our measure in this waiting posture, we can join with the Psalmist of old in the repeated and intense experience and desire of his soul: “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.” (Psalm 130:5-6) There was an intense longing in the soul of the Psalmist for the Lord to mercifully appear unto him and to regard his present case, state, and need. For, in the beginning of that Psalm he says, “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.”

‘The Lord is good unto them that wait for him.’ If we, in our measure, are among these favoured and blessed characters, we may say this as the first point of observation, the Lord has already been good to us, for, “Our seeking thy face was all of thy grace.” (*Gadsby's* 68) There is no waiting upon him, no seeking him, no hoping and quietly waiting, but under the gracious power, influence and teaching of his Spirit. He is ever first. “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee.” (Psalm 65:4) The Lord has already been good in revealing himself to us if we are among these waiting souls, for how is it possible that the soul should wait for and upon one of whom they have never heard? How can they wait upon one in whom they do not believe? How can they wait for and upon a person they do not credit? Well, he will appear again; the day of restoration will come to all who are waiting for him. The Lord has already been good to the waiting soul, in manifesting himself in some measure as that infinite, loving, faithful and merciful God, who in his goodness is both able and willing to help and deliver those that wait for him. Also he has been good in granting that measure of desire, so that the soul is found in this most gracious and blessed posture; for, my friends, the very next thing to obtaining is seeking; the very next thing to finding is waiting and looking. This is half way to the blessing, if we are found in this good and gracious experience of waiting. For such, spiritually considered, are really exercised—as we want to look at more closely presently.

The Lord is good to them in being the first mover in this waiting for him, for God alone can manifest himself in some measure to the heart, and put the soul in a waiting frame, intensely so at times—so that there is that earnest longing in the soul: “O when wilt thou come unto me?” (Psalm 101:2) When will the

Lord be pleased to appear to satisfy my longing soul in this present desire, that I might be restored, revived, strengthened, enlivened? When will he appear that I might get fresh touches and tokens of his favour, that the Lord would turn my captivity “as the streams in the south,” (Psalm 126:4) and mercifully deliver me from this distress and bondage, this coldness and hardness, that seems to have come over my spirit like a cloud? O that he would come! Well, ‘the Lord is good unto them that wait for him.’

The second thing in regard to God’s goodness is that wherever there is this true waiting upon him, the Lord himself will maintain the soul in the waiting. There will be a constant communication of necessary grace, and the powerful and unctuous influence of the Holy Spirit, so that the soul does not faint and despair—though there may come times when this is the felt condition of the waiting soul. But the Lord is good. He will never suffer a waiting soul to faint or to despair before obtaining the blessing: the exercise will be continued and maintained, as I trust some of us have proved in our own experience. We may get exceedingly low at times, and both eyes may begin to fail, but there is a looking upward and through many temptations. We may feel more like fainting than praying, more like giving over than still waiting—and yet that is impossible. We just cannot give it up, because the Lord is good. Wherever he causes a soul to approach unto him and wait upon him, he will continue that exercise in the heart until his appointed time to appear. This at times may be over a very long, painful, wearisome period, with many difficulties and many trials, but ‘the Lord is good unto them that wait for him.’ He will give needful grace to continue.

The Lord is good to them that wait for him in granting to them, from time to time, a most gracious and blessed encouragement from his own lips, from his own precious Word. By a sweet and gracious promise or by some sweet secret influence, he upholds the spirit in this season of waiting for him. ‘The Lord is good.’ Now I know that what we need and what we desire to receive from God is the application, with power, of his precious Word, that is so applicable to the case and condition. Nevertheless, the Word of God is full of encouragement to those that wait for him. Everywhere we find most comfortable, precious words addressed to the longing, waiting soul, who through many a trial, many a temptation, and much oppression, still looks, sues, begs and longs for the Lord to appear. Ah, God has said: “they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” (Isaiah 49:23) It is his own precious Word. Why, if you are truly waiting for him, not in the first experience of the soul maybe, but at some subsequent season, how applicable these words are and especially fitting in regard to the experience of God’s people. They particularly and peculiarly apply to those who have known some former measure and knowledge of his mercy, and now have come into a low place, much temptation, darkness, and oppression. They want the Lord to return and revive and renew them, and manifest himself again; so they wait for him. Nothing less than himself will do; nothing less than that which he has to bestow will suffice; nothing less than the power of God will accomplish what the soul wants, who is waiting for him and for that which he has freely and richly to bestow. There is a waiting for that, for which there is no substitute—nothing can take the place of that which the soul requires, it cannot be satisfied with less than that which the Lord himself bestows. So there is a waiting for him and a refusal of all other reliefs or hopes, comfort or help; that which the soul needs must come from the Lord alone.

Thirdly the Lord is good in that he encourages his people. He is good, very good. We have the examples of others who have waited and not been disappointed. God oftentimes delays for the trial of faith and patience, but he never has, never does, and never will deny the waiting soul. He may delay but he will not deny. This we find proved in the experience of godly Jacob of old, who waited to the ends of his days to obtain that blessing of blessings which his soul desired, and he was fully satisfied at last. Simeon was assured “that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” (Luke 2:26) He was not disappointed, though he waited almost to the close of his earthly career. He waited not in vain. These things are not to encourage us to treat the matter with indifference and say, ‘O well, it will come when God appoints it to come.’ That is not the feeling of a waiting soul—he cannot leave matters in such a way as that. No, there is an urgency upon the spirit in a waiting soul, you will not want to live in suspense, you will want the Lord to appear. Anna the prophetess, who had waited for such a very long season in her affliction, waited not in vain. ‘The Lord is good,’ and will, in his own time, appear exactly at the right time—suitably, sufficiently, graciously and powerfully to waiting souls.

There was a point in my own experience when I was a youth and verily believed that I was waiting for God. But I came to the point where I was so exceedingly discouraged that I thought I would seek him for the last time, and if he refused my cry I must conclude that it was not his will ever to appear for me or to me. I came to the point where I felt I must give up. Well, as I rose from my knees, sorely cast down, the words came with power:

*Blest is the man, O God,
Whose mind is stayed on thee;
Who waits for thy salvation, Lord,
Shall thy salvation see.*

(Gadsby's 330)

No doubt at that moment, it was a certainty, one of God's shalls—'Shall thy salvation see.' That put renewed strength and fresh encouragement and fresh help in my heart still to wait—yes, still to wait. But there is an appointed time:

*Tarry his leisure, then;
Wait the appointed hour.*

(Gadsby's 330)

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time... though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Habakkuk 2:3)

'The Lord is good.' In every way that we may look at it, he is good. He is not only good in causing them to wait, he is good in maintaining their hearts in the waiting, and he is good in visiting them with that for which they wait and look. 'The Lord is good unto them that wait for him.'

Now one word about the waiting. What may we understand by this? It is an exercise. It is not a state of lethargy, indifference, coldness, or the cessation or absence of earnestness and diligence upon the spirit. To wait is an exercise.

*Haste grasps at all, but nothing keeps;
Sloth is a dangerous state;
And he that flees, and he that sleeps,
Cannot be said to wait.*

(Gadsby's 783)

No, waiting is an exercise of the heart, in prayer and supplication at the footstool of God's mercy. It is a constant watching—"Watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." (Proverbs 8:34) Looking for his appearing, waiting that he would fulfil his precious promises and gracious Word. There are times when the soul is, as it were, all eyes—looking for the Lord's appearing, longing for him to come again. Well, the Lord is good to such.

There may be a variety of things for which this soul waits upon God—things which he has so freely and so abundantly to bestow. According to the present exercise, state and condition of the heart, so there will be a waiting, a patient waiting for that special favour, help or blessing.

Just a few thoughts about this point. The soul that is led captive by the devil, and through his temptations and evil suggestions is in darkness, with all kinds of despair instilled into the heart, will be waiting for Christ to be a Redeemer out of the hand of the enemy, for such feel that they have got into his hand. Just as the Israelites were in captivity, they are in the hand of the enemy, hanging their harps upon the willows and sitting by the rivers of Babylon. They cannot sing the songs of Zion, their hearts are sad and they long for deliverance. The oppressed soul, the tempted soul, will wait for God to appear to deliver from the power of the adversary.

The soul that is bowed down and burdened under a feeling sense of the power and guilt of their sin will long for the Lord to appear as their Friend and Saviour, their High Priest and Redeemer, to deliver them from the power, as well as from the filth and guilt, of their sin. Under a sense of this upon their conscience, burdening the heart so that at times it may be well-nigh intolerable, iniquity prevailing against them, they say, 'O, when wilt thou appear for me in this my dreadful state and condition!' 'The Lord is good unto them that wait for him.' He will appear at the appointed time. As the hymn writer says, so often quoted:

*The time of love will come,
When we shall clearly see,
Not only that he shed his blood,
But each shall say, "For me."*

(Gadsby's 330)

Are we waiting? I might ask myself this question and you—what are we waiting for? Is there an object, something which we are really waiting for? It may be you have been waiting for a long time. It may be that there is one or another that has indeed a precious hope, a sweet hope, but they long to be fully assured. They want the Lord to come and put every question out of question. They believe, truly believe and credit the greatness, glory, suitability and sufficiency of the cross of Christ and his atonement, but O, they want to feel their personal interest, the power of it, and this they are waiting for.

It may be that others are in a place and condition where they have darkness and no light. They want the Sun of righteousness to arise with healing in his wings. One and another are found waiting upon him, for help cannot come from any other source but from the Lord alone; so they are waiting for him to manifest himself in that particular which is suitable to their present condition. Restoration, renewing, deliverance, liberty, love, pardon, peace is what they are sighing for and waiting for. Not for the first time but in some subsequent experience, they want the Lord to come and do it for them again, in the influence and power of it. The Lord is good, absolutely good, intensely good to those who wait for him.

Now the next thing in our text: 'to the soul that seeketh him.' Well, if we are truly in a waiting posture this will apply as well. There will be a seeking him, a feeling after him, a going about the streets of the city, as did the church of old, who went about the streets of the city seeking him truly, and asking this too, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" (Song of Solomon 3:3) O yes, there is love in the heart and therefore the desire. This is that which creates the desire! We do not really miss a person to whom we have no love, but O, if there is intense love, even naturally, we miss a person. We love their presence, we love their company, we love to enjoy communion with them, and we love the mutual responses of oneness and affection, so we miss a person whom we love. So it is with the Lord Jesus Christ. The soul that loves him will miss him. When he is absent they will mourn his absence and will seek him.

Now this is not only in respect to the sweetness of his presence and union with him, but also, at times, the necessity laid upon the heart for his appearing, to do for us the thing that we feelingly stand in need of. There are those spoken of in the gospels, a number of various cases, and what do we read of them? They came seeking for Jesus. This was their enquiry, they asked where they might find *him*, and they pursued until they found him. They had got a case, you see, and that is the point is it not? Have we a case?

*Sinners can say, and none but they,
How precious is the Saviour!*

(Gadsby's 806)

They had got a wound that needed healing, a disability or disease they needed him to cure. If we are like the blind man, like the woman with the issue of blood, like the centurion with the sick servant, or like the woman with a devil possessed daughter—real cases that came seeking for Jesus—so it is still: 'to the soul that seeketh him.'

There are other times when we seem to be in such a place as godly Job. He longed, his heart cried out for God: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." (Job 23:3-4) But, he said, I cannot find him! "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand... but I cannot behold him: on the right hand... I cannot see him." (Job 23:8-9) "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!"

Well, as has been said, this is the next thing to finding him. If our hearts are in true and real earnest in regard to this, and we are found seeking after God, after the Saviour, after Christ, in those appointed ways, paths and places where he has promised, then he will be found.

*Ye lambs of Christ's fold, ye weaklings in faith,
Who long to lay hold on life by his death;*

*Who fain would believe him, and in your best room
Would gladly receive him, but fear to presume;
The Lord whom thou seekest will not tarry long;
And to him the weakest is dear as the strong.*

(Gadsby's 804)

These are seeking souls, real seekers with heart, eyes, and hands—all stretching out after this precious person.

But to keep to the point in regard to the special application of these words to those souls who are waiting and longing for restoring mercy, restoring grace and reviving love. To those who are seeking and waiting for renewing life and light and power in their souls, on account of a season of darkness, oppression, temptation and distress, the Lord is good. He is good in encouraging these seeking souls, as well as encouraging the waiting souls—for he has never, never said, 'Seek ye me in vain.' "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain" (Isaiah 45:19) no, never. This is not the character or the way of the God of Israel. He will never disappoint the seeking soul.

*Ye broken hearts all, who cry out, 'Unclean,'
And taste of the gall of in-dwelling sin;
Lamenting it truly, and loathing it too,
And seeking help duly, as sinners must do.*

(Gadsby's 687)

These are the characters who shall be blessed and favoured in due season with the Lord's gracious appearing, to pardon their sin, to redeem them from evil, to restore their souls, and to turn again their captivity... as the streams in the south. (Psalm 126:4) But it is this waiting and seeking season that at times is so exceedingly trying—the suspense of it, the temptations attending it, the voice of the devil who may say, "There is no help for him in God." "Many there be," said the Psalmist, "which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." (Psalm 3:2) But that was only a lie. There *is* help for him in God—plenteous, suitable help—so that we may surely say that the waiting, seeking soul shall not be disappointed, shall never be deceived, shall never be ashamed. The Lord is good, the Lord is gracious, the Lord is mindful, and the Lord is favourable unto waiting, seeking souls. 'He is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.'

This matter manifests the sovereignty and the wisdom of God in all his dealings. All is by his eternal and sovereign appointment. Though there may be seeking, hoping and waiting, and God delays, yet there is a blessed certainty: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Habakkuk 2:3) The time will come, because of the Lord's goodness, sovereignty, faithfulness.

'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.' We shall not be found waiting for something of which we are already in possession. Hope always looks for something further, something future that is expected: 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait.' This hoping is the exercise of the soul on account of faith in God's promise, as well as his covenant undertaking, faithfulness and power. There is a hoping in him: 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait.'

In every aspect of it, this is a good thing. First, it is good in that it is honouring to God. The hoping soul, quietly waiting, honours the Lord by believing that he is merciful and faithful to his Word. This is on account of the exercise of God-given faith in the soul, which faith honours God. Though there may be times when it is hoping against hope and waiting in the midst of much discouragement and disappointment, yet still the soul hopes and quietly waits, and this is to the ascribing of honour and glory to the God of all mercy, grace and faithfulness.

Secondly, it is good where the man himself is concerned: 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait.' It is good to hope against hope, still to look and still to firmly and graciously expect, upon the realisation and the crediting of the unfailing faithfulness of God. It is profitable, comfortable, and a gracious and blessed posture to be in; it is good in every aspect of it. I am sure there have been seasons when our hearts, in this state of seeking, hoping and quietly waiting, have found even in that a measure of

sweetness in the spirit. Yes, a sweetness. And there are times, I trust, when we have been encouraged by God's gracious Word, his blessed promises, so that there has been an assurance upon our spirit of one day obtaining. We have verily believed that we should obtain the blessing yet, and this has created fresh exercise of heart: hoping and quietly waiting for it. O, have you, as I trust I have more than once, been as sure of the blessing as though you already possessed it? Believing in God's good time it would come?

It is good that a man should both hope—and it says: 'quietly wait.' O, what a profound, blessed matter is in these two words! What a sweet posture! What a sacred experience to be under the exercise of faith, love and desire God-ward, quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord. So different to all that turmoil and impatience and restlessness and fretfulness and hastiness that is wrought in the spirit by the wretched working of unbelief! "He that believeth shall not make haste." (Isaiah 28:16) O, the turmoil, distress and despair produced by unbelief! But what a sweet, quiet waiting and hoping is the effect of God-given faith in the heart. Under the influence of this, we shall not desire for one moment to hasten God's time, neither shall we desire it to be hindered. It is a quiet waiting upon God to do what he has promised, in his own way and time. All this is the effect of faith and love. O, we would not lift one finger to further God's purposes in a frame like this, nor seek in any way to hasten his time, but quietly, patiently wait upon him, and this is good. It is good, for whatever our feelings and whatever our experience may be, we shall never hasten God's time. It is his time and it is good to quietly wait for it.

Well now, finally, what is the waiting soul waiting for? Why, the salvation of the Lord. The first and the profitable thing to notice is that this is a waiting for Christ, for he is salvation. He is the very source of it, he is the surety of it and he it is that has accomplished this great salvation. It is with him. He is the salvation of his people. That is the first thing. If we are favoured and privileged to possess this precious Saviour as our portion, as our Friend, as our All, with him we shall have everything. This is a precious thing in regard to the soul's feelings.

*Blest soul that can say, 'Christ only I seek.'
Wait for him alway; be constant though weak;*

*The Lord whom thou seekest will not tarry long;
And to him the weakest is dear as the strong.*

(Gadsby's 804)

Yes, to him the weakest is as precious and as loved and as dear as the strong.

It is waiting for Christ. O, this is a most blessed thing, for as Rutherford says, and a wonderful truth it is: "They that desire Christ will have him." O yes, they will, and they will love him to all eternity. O, can we appeal unto God in regard to this—God who knows our hearts, who reads our every thought and understands all our feelings—and say, 'Lord, thou knowest that I desire thee.' They that desire Christ shall have him. O yes, they shall! They may have to wait, but the day will come—yes it will!—when God will satisfy them. Nothing else but God will satisfy. This precious Saviour will be the eternal portion to them that quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Secondly, not only is there a waiting for Christ, but also for that salvation which is full and free. It shall be an eternal salvation—from self, sin, wrath, death, condemnation and hell; from Satan and the world, from all our woes and sins and darkness and death. It is a full salvation from every woe. It is a free salvation, wrought out by Christ, which is freely given to everyone that is caused to hope and quietly wait for it. It is a perfect, flawless, full and precious salvation.

Well, may God strengthen and enable us to seek, hope and quietly wait. The Lord is good, particularly and especially if we are in such a condition as answers to that which was the experience of the Israelites, in their special desire for the Lord to appear for their help and deliverance. May we prove the same as was proved in answer to Daniel's prayer; (Daniel 9) may we know the same deliverance that was granted in answer to his importunate petition before his God, who was pleased to manifest his favour, power, redemption, love, mercy and unfailing faithfulness to his blessed seeking people.

The Lord grant us the experience of it, for his name's sake.

Amen.