

LESSONS FOR A QUARANTINED CHURCH - Part seven

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LEARNING HOW TO LIVE IN GOD'S PRESENCE CONTINUALLY

Psalm 25:5 - "Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day."

The phrase I want to focus attention on today from this verse is the last - ***"For You I wait all the day."***

What I am thinking about is this: These words describe something very different from ***calling on God in the day of trouble***, or ***rising early to seek His face***.

And the difference is this: These words, ***"For You I wait all the day,"*** don't describe any one particular time at all. They are not limited to one moment of the day, or the week. In other words, this phrase doesn't describe what we might typically call the individual's ***devotional*** life.

Now, the devotional life is good. It's vitally important. But these words from our text describe something ***deeper***, something that must ***follow-up*** on the devotional life if it's to have meaning and pulling-power in the believer practicing it.

In fact, I would contend today that in these words, ***"For You I wait all the day,"*** we have the reason for the most common complaint about the devotional life. The most specific and repeated complaint given by sincere, honest Christians is that they find their devotions dry and boring. As much as they wish otherwise, they don't get much out of their time in the Word and in prayer.

This is why I want to do a whole study on this particular phrase. This verse, in fact, the ***last phrase*** of this verse, can help make your study of the Word, your prayer time with Father God, and your Christian life in general, more vital and impacting on the way you think and act day by day. This verse can help you freshly sense the ***genuineness of your faith***.

The first point is the main point of this message. The others merely explain and amplify it.

1) **FOR ANY SERIOUS CHRISTIAN, KNOWING GOD REQUIRES MORE THAN VISITING GOD**

This is what stands out and shines so clearly in this phrase - ***"On You I wait all the day."***

Philip Yancey writes of the experience of Christian columnist ***Malcolm Muggeridge*** in the early 1970's.

Muggeridge was stunned to learn that members of the Soviet intellectual elite were experiencing a renewed interest in spiritual issues. Muggeridge met with a Russian dissident living in exile in England. He told Muggeridge of the revival in the Soviet Union. Muggeridge writes and says, "I asked him how this could have happened, given the enormous anti-religious brainwashing job done on the citizenry, and the absence of all Christian literature, including the Scriptures."

"His response was memorable. 'The authorities,' he said, 'forgot to suppress the works of Tolstoy, one of the most

perfect expositions of the Christian faith for modern times.”

If that is true, listen to what Leo Tolstoy said about carrying the Kingdom of God within you throughout the day. And as you listen, keep the phrase of our text - **“On You I wait all the day”** - glued to the very front of your mind:

“A man who professes an external religious law is like someone standing in the light of a lantern fixed to a post. It is light all around him, but there is nowhere further for him to walk. A man who possesses the words of Christ in the heart is like a man carrying a lantern on a long pole before him, always lighting up fresh ground and always encouraging him to walk further.”

Here’s my concern: Religion, even the Christian religion, is not the same as walking in the Spirit. There is so much that can be professed with little or nothing of the presence of God in it.

Tolstoy’s picture comparison of those two types of lamps is brilliant. One is **portable** and one is **not**. And in that picture Tolstoy is describing two kinds of religious expression. One of them doesn’t **go** anywhere. It has the fixed reference point of commands and doctrines and regulations and forms. The other is totally taken up into the life professing it. It **carries the dynamic of the kingdom along everywhere else it goes, and into everything it touches.**

Now, if that’s true the important question has to be: **What makes the difference between these two experiences? What is the difference between static and transforming religious profession?**

To find a verse that could answer this question would be a life-changing experience indeed! And the Psalmist, in our text, tells us the difference. It has to do with understanding and maintaining the vital **link** between the ingredients that **nourish** the Christian faith, and the actual **living** of that faith moment by moment.

Let me try to make it clearer. If my **waiting on God** is something I **do** and then **leave**, it will have almost no value. If my waiting on God is a **passing visit**, even a **long and passionate visit**, it won’t have life-changing power. If I merely **call** on the Lord, but do not **live** with the Lord, my cry will sooner or later begin to feel empty and staged.

It just might be that the spiritual struggles of many are rooted in this **broken and fragmentary** idea of the devotional life. Devotions become a **slice** of spiritual life. More like a **segment** than the whole **orange**.

Many times pastors, in their sermons, even **refer** to devotions as a form of spiritual **exercise**. And that has its place as long as it’s properly understood. After all, we all have to **do** our devotions. And there is value in exercise. There is value in the discipline of the spiritual drill of devotions.

But if the **end** or **goal** of the exercise becomes bound to the **moment** - the **feeding**, the **teaching**, the **devotions themselves** - we might just begin to think of the Christian life as **contained** in those **separate** times of church meetings, or prayer, or Bible study, and leave it all **detached** from this habit of **waiting on God all the day**.

2) **APPROACHING GOD IS NEVER SOMETHING YOU CAN DO AND BE DONE WITH**

Here is an important life principle regarding your walk with God. I have not properly or fully understood entering the presence of the Lord if I can leave it behind. Genuine spirituality is marked by the way in which it waits on God ***“all the day.”***

The Psalmist is very careful to explain his meaning of this wonderful phrase right in the context of the surrounding verses:

Psalm 25:4-5 - **“Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. {5} Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day.”**

Look carefully at those words. ***“Make me to know your ways...teach me your paths...Lead me in Your truth...”***

There’s a vital difference between ***learning*** truth and being ***led in truth***. That’s why the Psalmist talks about knowing God’s ***ways*** and ***paths***. You can’t learn a path like you learn math. To learn a path you must ***walk*** the path. This is why David doesn’t say, ***“The Lord is my professor.”*** He says, ***“The Lord is my shepherd.”***

Here is why there are many people listening to me right now, who find the whole Christian experience frustrating. Here is why there are many young adults and students who find themselves second guessing their faith. Here is why Christians sometimes flop around from highs to lows in their Christian walk, depending on the last conference they attended or the last podcast they heard. ***Nothing in the Christian life will work when the feeding is divorced from the living.***

I can ***call*** on God, true enough. And I ***should***. I can go to church repeatedly. And I ***should***. I can read my Bible fairly frequently. And I ***must***. And I would challenge anyone who questioned my faith. But I know when I’m ***coming and going*** with God. I can tell when I ***approach*** Him and then ***go my own way***.

And here’s the ***warning***, and also the ***invitation*** of the psalmist: ***I will never be able to make the Christian life work that way.*** Not long term. It was never ***intended*** to work that way. ***Wait on the Lord all the day!***

3) **LEARN HOW TO WAIT ON GOD ALL THE DAY**

“I can’t do that, pastor Don, I have to go to college. I have to go to work. Do you think I’m some kind of monk in a monastery?”

No, I suppose most of us will never be monks in a monastery. But busy people can, and must, learn to wait on God all the day. And remember, the man who penned these words wasn’t some pastor in rural Nebraska. He was the heavily stressed king of a military powder-keg.

Here’s what everyone must do if they want to ***“wait on God all the day:”***

- a) **Recall to your mind the presence and words of Jesus with frequency.** Don't let them totally slip into the subconscious part of your mind.

John 15:4-7 - "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. {5} "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. {6} "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. {7} "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

I think we can see the principle here. The picture is wonderfully simple. There is no **detached** spiritual life. It is not something you can live on your own **at will** for one minute. Jesus says part of **abiding in Him** - that is His way of describing **"waiting on God all the day"** - is **keeping His words in us (7)**.

Please notice Jesus is outlining the crucial distinction between **reading** His words and **recalling** His words. Abiding in Jesus means being **programed** by His words.

After you start your day with the Lord, **capsulate** some principle you've seen in His Word. Put the principle of the passage into one sentence. **Then restate that principle over and over during the day.** Keep the power of the principle alive in your mind.

- b) **Remember to whom you belong all day.** Like buttoning up your coat, some things must be **started** right if they are to ever **finish** right. Here's a foundational principle that needs to be **tattooed** on your heart:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? {20} For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

Without this understanding you will see no point in remembering the words of Jesus. If you see yourself as your own boss your own thoughts will constantly override God's Word. Your devotions will be worse then just **useless**. They will actually become brutally **condemning**.

- c) **Do not allow into your mind things that will smuggle in Satanic deception and rob precious truth of its intended power.** Increase the security over your mind. Your mind is more important than any border crossing or airport terminal. And the dangerous traffic is far more sinister.

Let me try to look quickly at a passage that's so well known, we can easily missing one of the main points:

Ephesians 6:11-17 - "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. {12} For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,

against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. {13} Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. {14} Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, {15} and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; {16} in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. {17} And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."**

Notice something important. As Paul wraps up his overall description of the Christian life and its specific provisions, he comes to talk about **salvation** in general - the whole of **life received graciously from God through Christ**. And, after mentioning all the other aspects and provisions, he calls salvation the **helmet** of salvation.

That's because, more than anything else, **being saved has to do with your head - your thoughts - your interests**. And if the battle with the Devil is going to be won, it's the **inner life through the mind** that will need protecting. This is where **affections** are birthed and **priorities** get established.

- d) **Be alert all day to the very next thing Jesus would do in your circumstances.** Make this your conscious approach to **all** of life. Make this your **spiritual habit**, not just an **occasional act**.

Again, look just for a minute at Paul's words: **Ephesians 6:15** - "...and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE." We used to sing these words so frequently when we gathered together - "Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee."

I have an old, worn book of sermons by the great Baptist preacher, **J.W.Jowett**. He talks about this very verse with these warm and pointed words: **"This implies a way of living in which the soul keeps itself reverently posed towards the eternal, with an alert readiness to know and to do the will of the Lord in the very next step."**

Wonderful. That's it exactly. Have you ever been anywhere and felt that growing worm in your stomach that you really shouldn't be there. With certain friends. Watching a certain movie. And the Holy Spirit just leaned into you and said "You were created and redeemed for something purer and more noble than this!" It's how you respond **immediately** - right at that moment - that tells whether your feet are controlled by the Lordship of Christ.

Learn to not merely **approach** God for a visit. Learn, and learn deeply, what it means to **"wait on the Lord all the day."**