

Waiting On God or Holy Presumption

By George Davis and Michael Clark

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 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 40:27-31, NKJV)

What Is Waiting?

In the western world, we hate to wait. We want everything instantly. If we sit in a restaurant waiting for our food more than ten minutes, we are ready to file a complaint with the manager. If the traffic light keeps us on hold for more than two minutes we start entertaining thoughts of running it. We eat micro-waved foods and drink instant coffee so we don't have to wait. We want it now and we want it "Biggie Sized!"

The word *wait* in the above passage is from the Hebrew word *qavah*, which means "to bind together by twisting." So *waiting* in this case is not speaking of inactivity, though inactivity might be required for a season. Rather it speaks of being joined to God in such a way that His desires become yours, being attentive to His vision and interests and acting only when He acts and moving only when He moves. It is being so melded together that His life is your life. It is being so intertwined with God, attuned to His pulse, that when He rests, we rest and when He works, we work. The object is not the work or the wait, but rather a complete unity *in* Him. Jesus said, "My Father works hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). He said that He only did the works He saw His Father doing, and only spoke the words He heard His Father saying. In John chapter seven He also said by inference, "My Father waits and I wait."

Jesus, Our Model of Waiting

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." For even His brothers did not believe in Him. Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come." When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee. But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. (John 7:1-10, NKJV).

The very nature of the fallen soul is summed-up in this phrase, "*Your time is always ready.*" God had created Adam and Eve in His image and had started the long process of conforming them into His *likeness* there in the garden. It was then that the devil saw His chance, "*For God knows that in the day you eat of it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*" They were as innocent as blind new-borns, but the tempter got them to believe that they could sidestep the process and grab the bull by the horns, simply by eating this lovely fruit, becoming *instantly like* God.

At the time that the King James Bible was written and this passage in Isaiah was translated into English, the courts of Queens had women who were called "Ladies in Waiting." Their whole purpose was to make the life of the queen easier. They ran her errands. They took care of the "small stuff" and made the queen more effective in her duties. These ladies in waiting did not live for themselves or their own desires. They only lived to please the queen and were highly prized when they knew their sovereign so well that her thoughts were their thoughts and her desires were their desires.

Jesus is the supreme example of what it means to *wait upon the Lord*. Consider these passages closely.

Jesus therefore said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing of myself, but as my Father taught me, I say these things." (John 8:28 WEB)

Jesus therefore answered them, "Most assuredly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father doing. For whatever things he does, these the Son also does likewise." (John 5:19 WEB)

I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is righteous; because I don't seek my own will, but the will of my Father who sent me. (John 5:30 WEB)

So what is this to us? Jesus also said to His disciples, "The disciple is not *above* his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." So, then, we who are His disciples are to be so intertwined with our Father that we only do the works we see Him doing and speak only His words. There is no room in our lives for presumption. Presumption is independently deciding *what* and *when* based upon what we perceive to be good and appropriate.

"Let me run! I want to run!"

It is very hard it is for a man to stand idly by and watch others be "used" in service to the King. We find our identity in our works, even those works we supposedly do out of love for God. There is a story in the Old Testament about such a man. His name was Ahimaaz, the son of the high priest. Absalom, King David's son, had risen up against David and finally was killed in battle. Joab knew that he had to send word back to David that his son was dead, and chose a foreigner among the ranks to take David the sad news of the death of his son. But Ahimaaz had a better idea. He wanted to run!

Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the LORD has avenged him of his enemies." And Joab said to him, "You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is dead." Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran. And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." So Joab said, "Why will you run,

my son, since you have no news ready?" "But whatever happens," he said, "let me run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite. Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate, to the wall, lifted his eyes and looked, and there was a man, running alone. Then the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, "If he is alone, there is news in his mouth." And he came rapidly and drew near. Then the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "There is another man, running alone!" And the king said, "He also brings news." So the watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He is a good man, and comes with good news." And Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well!" Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king, and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!" The king said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant and me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was about." And the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still. Just then the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "There is good news, my lord the king! For the LORD has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you." And the king said to the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" So the Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like that young man!" Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom--my son, my son Absalom--if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:19-33, NKJV)

We in our fallen natures very much want to run. We see a great commotion and want to be part of the action, even if we don't have a clue what it is all about. Joab knew that Ahimaaz was a "good man." He also knew it was not his day to run for he had no message to bear. So often today we hear men behind pulpits and on conference platforms who have run ahead of God and really have no kingdom message, but rather one of their own contrivance. Of these Jeremiah prophesied, "And the LORD said to me, 'The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart'" (Jeremiah 14:14, NKJV). This is a very serious business, "'for I have not sent them,' says the LORD,' yet they

prophecy a lie in My name, that I may drive you out, and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you" (Jeremiah 27:15, NKJV). Following these presumptuous leaders is blindly following the blind.

Paul warned the church in Galatia that they could not perfect in their flesh what God planted in them by the Spirit. It also holds true that He will not perfect in the Spirit what we start in the flesh! How often we, like Abraham, tire of waiting and decide to fulfill God's promise of a divine child by sleeping with a bond-woman. No matter how desperately Abraham cried out to God to bless his Ishmael, God refused. God will share His glory with no one. He will have full credit or none. Speaking of the Pharisees, Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:13, 14, NKJV).

Remember, the race does not go to the swift nor does the battle always go to the mighty (Ecclesiastes 9:11), nor is youthful zeal and strength enough. It goes to those who wait upon the Lord for that *new strength* that comes down from above in His time and for His purposes as they are intertwined with Him alone. It goes to those who have no sufficiency except the sufficiency of God. These are the ones He knows intimately and who know Him, His heart, His pulse and His timing (see Matthew 7:21-23).

Waiting - The Supreme Test of Man

God rarely does anything before a long period of waiting is accomplished. He does this for several reasons. He wants to test us--to show us what is in our hearts, just as Israel was made to wait in the wilderness to humble and test them to know what was in *their* hearts. (See Deuteronomy 8:2). He wants to see who will wait upon Him in faith and who will act in their own presumption/unbelief. He also lets enough time pass that all hope of seeing the promise fulfilled in our own strength and ability is played out. Such seasons test the faith and patience of the elect. Abraham is a classic illustration of this. It was through a long period of waiting that Abraham was proven righteous. Sarah becoming barren in her old age was not a great enough test. Hagar was still an option. Abraham's seed also had to dry up so that all hope, in his ability to make the promise happen, died.

Then there was Daniel. He understood by books the number of the years (seventy) of the Babylonian captivity had been fulfilled, but he did not start a "Jerusalem Restoration Movement." Daniel knew that only the mighty hand of God could turn again the captivity of His people. Daniel waited for the salvation of Israel. He did not start beating the drum or holding conferences. He never rallied the people at all but "set his face toward God," fasting and praying. It was Daniel acting in unison with God, intertwined with God's heart and purpose, that brought forth the freedom of Israel and broke the captivity of Babylon. The captivity of the people of God to Babylon the Great and her harlot daughters in our day will be broken by those who wait in faith upon the Father with no less devotion.

In the book of Acts, the disciples waited in the upper room until they were empowered from on high. The real awakenings of history were also born out of such waiting and empowerment. The real question is; are we going to wait for the real move of heaven, or are we going to get out there and get things moving ourselves?

Unless God has given us a sure word and has called us out of waiting, we had best not move. To act before then is presumption of the highest order. Remember that our Savior waited for thirty-three years before He was openly revealed, at the banks of Jordan, as the Son in whom God took pleasure. Waiting is the most difficult thing for man to do. It is in such times that you hear the impatient cry, "We can't just sit here doing nothing! Let's do something even if it's wrong!"

Finally, we would like to share the final chapter of "The Normal Christian Life" by Watchman Nee, which has been a rich source of blessing to both of us. We hope it will be the same to you! It is titled "Waste." Have you ever thought that in the eyes of sinful man and the carnal Christian, God is a God of waste? Are you in despair because God seems to have you on "Hold," wasting your life away, while Christian "builders" are busy raising their kingdoms? And if that is not bad enough, are they criticizing you for not joining in with them and leaving your place of rest at His feet? Remember, it was the builders who rejected the Chief Cornerstone (see Psalms 118:22) in their zeal to leave their mark on this earth (see Matthew 21:33-46).

THE KINGDOM PRINCIPLE OF WASTE

"But there were some that had indignation among themselves saying, To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred pence and given to the poor. And they murmured against her" (Mark 14:4, 5). These words bring us to what I believe the Lord would have us consider finally together, namely, that which is signified by the little word "waste."

What is waste? Waste means, among other things, giving more than is necessary. If a shilling will do and you give a pound, it is a waste. If two grams will do and you give a kilogram, it is a waste. If three days will suffice to finish a task well enough and you lavish five days or a week on it, it is a waste. Waste means that you give something too much for something too little. If someone is receiving more than he is considered to be worth, then that is waste.

But remember, we are dealing here with something which the Lord said was to go out with the Gospel, wherever that Gospel should be carried. Why? Because he intends that the preaching of the Gospel should issue something along the very lines of the action of Mary here, namely, that people should come to him and waste themselves on him. This is the result that he is seeking.

We must look at this question of wasting on the Lord from two angles: that of Judas (John 12:4-6) and that of the other disciples (Matt. 26:8, 9); and for our present purpose we will run together the parallel accounts.

All of the twelve thought it a waste. To Judas of course, who had never called Jesus "Lord," everything that was poured out upon him was waste. Not only was ointment waste: even water would have been waste. Here Judas stands for the world. In the world's estimation the service of the Lord, and our giving ourselves to him for such service, is sheer waste. He has never been loved, never had a place in the hearts of the world, so any giving to him is a waste. Many say: "Such-and-such a man could make good in the world if only he were not a Christian!" Because a man has some natural talent or other asset in the world's eyes, they count it a shame for him to be serving the Lord. They think such people are really too good for the Lord. "What waste of a useful life!" they say.

Let me give a personal instance. In 1929 I returned from Shanghai to my home town of Foochow. One day I was walking along the street with a stick, very weak

and in broken health, and I met one of my old college professors. He took me into a teashop where we sat down. He looked at me from head to foot and from foot to head, and then he said: "Now look here; during your college days we thought a good deal of you, and we had hopes that you would achieve something great. Do you mean to tell me that this is what you are?" Looking at me with penetrating eyes, he asked that very pointed question. I must confess that, on hearing it, my first desire was to break down and weep. My career, my health, everything had gone, and here was my old professor who taught me law in the school, asking me: "Are you still in this condition, with no success, no progress, nothing to show?"

But the very next moment--and I have to admit that in all my life it was the first time I really knew what it meant to have the "Spirit of glory" resting upon me. The thought of being able to pour out my life for my Lord flooded my soul with glory. Nothing short of the Spirit of glory was on me then. I could look up and without reservation say, "Lord, I praise thee! This is the best thing possible; it is the right course that I have chosen!" To my professor it seemed a total waste to serve the Lord; but that is what the Gospel is for--to bring each one of us to a true estimate of his worth.

Judas felt it a waste. "We could manage better with the money by using it in some other way. There are plenty of poor people. Why not rather give it for charity, do some social service for their uplift, help the poor in some practical way? Why pour it out at the feet of Jesus?" (see John 12:4-6). That is always the way the world reasons. "Can you not find a better employment for your life? Can you not do something better with yourself than this? It is going a bit too far to give yourself altogether to the Lord!"

But if the Lord is worthy, then how can it be a waste? He is worthy to be so served. He is worthy for me to be his prisoner. He is worthy for me just to live for him. He is worthy! What the world says about this does not matter. The Lord says: "Do not trouble her." So let us not be troubled. Men may say what they like, but we can stand on this ground, that the Lord said, "It is a good work. Every true work is not done on the poor; every true work is done to me." When once our eyes have been opened to the real worth of our Lord Jesus, nothing is too good for him.

But I do not want to dwell too much on Judas. Let us go on to see what was the attitude of the other disciples, because their reaction affects us even more than

does his. We do not greatly mind what the world is saying; we can stand that, but we do very much mind what other Christians are saying who ought to understand. And yet we find that they said the same thing as Judas; and they not only said it but they were very upset, very indignant about it. "When the disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor" (Matthew 26:8, 9).

Of course we know that the attitude of mind is all too common among Christians which says, "Get all you can for as little as possible." That however is not what is in view here, but something deep. Let me illustrate. Has someone been telling you that you are wasting your life by sitting still and not doing much? They say, "Here are people who ought to get out into this or that kind of work. They could be used to help this or that group of people. Why are they not more active?"--and in saying so, their whole idea is use. Everything ought to be used to the full in ways they understand.

There are those who have been very concerned with some dear servants of the Lord on this very ground, that they are apparently not doing enough. They could do so much more, they think, if they could secure an entry somewhere and enjoy a greater acceptance and prominence in certain circles. They could then be used in a far greater way. I have spoken already of a sister whom I knew for a long time and who, I think, is the one by whom I have been helped most. She was used of the Lord in a very real way during those years when I was associated with her, though to some of us at the time this was not so apparent. The one concern in my heart was this: "She is not used!" Constantly I said to myself, "Why does she not get out and take some meetings, go somewhere, do something? It is a waste for her to be living in that small village with nothing happening!" Sometimes, when I went to see her, I almost shouted at her. I said, "No one knows the Lord as you do. You know the Book in a most living way. Do you not see the need around? Why don't you do something? It is a waste of time, a waste of energy, a waste of money, a waste of everything, just sitting here and doing nothing!"

But no, brethren, that is not the first thing with the Lord. He wants you and me to be used, certainly. God forbid that I should preach inactivity, or seek to justify a complacent attitude to the world's need. As Jesus himself says, "The gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world." But the question is one of emphasis. Looking back today, I realize how greatly the Lord was in fact using that dear sister

to speak to a number of us who, as young men, were at that time in his training school for this very work of the Gospel. I cannot thank God enough for her and for the influence of her life upon me.

What, then, is the secret? Clearly it is this, that in approving Mary's action at Bethany, the Lord Jesus was laying down one thing as a basis of all service: that you pour out all you have, your very self, unto him; and if that should be all he allows you to do, that is enough. It is not first of all a question of whether "the poor" have been helped or not. That will follow, but the first question is: Has the Lord been satisfied?

There is many a meeting we might address, many a convention at which we might minister, many a Gospel campaign in which we might have a share. It is not that we are unable to do it. We could labor and be used to the full; but the Lord is not so concerned about our ceaseless occupation in work for him. That is not his first object. The service of the Lord is not to be measured by tangible results. No, my friends, the Lord's first concern is with our position at his feet and our anointing of his head. Whatever we have as an "alabaster box": the most precious thing, the thing dearest in the world to us--yes, let me say it, the outflow from us of a life that is produced by the very Cross itself--we give that all up to the Lord. To some, even of those who should understand, it seems a waste; but that is what he seeks above all. Often enough the giving to him will be in tireless service, but he reserves to himself the right to suspend the service for a time, in order to discover to us whether it is that, or himself, that holds us.