

# (Power From on High) 7. Waiting for the Spirit

by A.B. Simpson

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*Waiting on God is essential for a great transition in our lives, allowing us to cease from ourselves and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4

**Topics:** "Waiting On God", "Empowerment by the Holy Spirit"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the importance of waiting on God for the filling of the Holy Spirit, illustrating that spiritual growth often requires time and preparation. He draws parallels between natural processes and spiritual waiting, highlighting that just as seeds need time to germinate, believers must also wait to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Simpson teaches that this waiting is not passive but an active posture of receiving and claiming God's blessings, which leads to a deeper understanding of our need for Him and His fullness. He encourages believers to embrace this waiting period as a time for self-examination, listening to God's voice, and preparing for the work He has for them. Ultimately, waiting on the Lord is portrayed as essential for spiritual empowerment and readiness for service.

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## Transcript

"Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." "Wait," saith He, "for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of Me." "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

These three passages all suggest a single and very definite thought -- waiting on God for the filling of the Holy Ghost. The law of time is an important factor both in nature and in grace. There are some operations which are instantaneous, but there are many more that require the lapse of time and the process of development. The principle of vegetation is gradual, unfolding first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Winter is as needful as spring to fertilize the ground, and the seed must lie silent in the soil until it germinates and springs into the blade and the blossom.

And so, in the spiritual world, there is a place for waiting. God's work of creation was not instantaneous but successive. The promise of the coming Redeemer waited for four thousand years. Abraham waited for the fulfillment of the promise of his son. Moses waited forty years before he could go forth to the great work of His life. Jesus waited for thirty years to begin His public ministry.

The promises of God are for those that wait for Him; and the spiritual life which, in some respects is instantaneous in its operations, in others, is progressive. There is a moment when we definitely receive the Holy Ghost; but there is a preparation for His coming, and a waiting for His fullness for us, just as much as for Jesus and Moses. Doubtless there is a sense in which they waited, which cannot be true of us. For them the Holy Ghost was not yet sent from heaven. The day of Pentecost was the moment of His arrival on earth. Up to that moment He had resided in the person of Jesus, now He was to reside in his Body, the Church, and the earth was to be His home. In that sense we cannot wait for the coming of the Comforter, for He has come and He is here.

But even if the Holy Ghost had come to earth already, that very same command would still have been given to the disciples to wait in the upper room. There was a preparation on their part, just as necessary as the Spirit's coming from heaven to earth. And there is a preparation on our part just as necessary in these days.

It is important, however, that we understand the true nature of this waiting. It is not waiting for the Lord, but it is waiting on the Lord. It is not looking forward to a distant blessing, but it is continuing in the attitude of receiving and claiming the blessing, and giving time for the Holy Spirit to fill the waiting heart with all His fullness.

It is more than expectation of a future blessing. It is rather accepting a present blessing, and yet a blessing so large and full, that it cannot be taken by us in all its completeness in a moment of time, but requires the opening of every vessel of our being, and the continuance of our heart in the attitude of receiving.

The Master is calling us, as He called them to these seasons of waiting, and there are deep reasons in the principles that underlie all Christian experience, which will show the importance and necessity of our thus waiting on the Lord.

I.

This season of waiting on the Lord was fitted and designed to mark a great transition in their lives, an epoch of spiritual new departure, an era of the chronology of the heart. God wants His people to have such epochs and such eras.

As we read the records of geology we find that the surface of our globe has been formed by successive layers, between which can be traced successive breaks. There is a stratum of rock, and then there is a stratum of wreck and conglomerate masses, between the layers of previous strata.

It is so in spiritual life. These days of waiting lead us to new planes and new advances. Sometimes it is very desirable that there should be a complete break, that we may get out of the old ruts, and be free to take a higher place, and make a bolder advance.

In music one of the most effective things is the emphatic pause. The word "Selah" in the book of Psalms expresses this pause, and in order to have the effectiveness of such a pause it cannot be too complete a silence. Then the chorus which follows has a double emphasis. And so the Holy Ghost has given us our Selahs in the chorus of spiritual life, emphatic pauses when God wants us to be still and listen to Him, and break away from old ideas and measures, and reach out into the larger fullness of His thought and will.

II.

This time of waiting on God was also necessary in order to teach them the greatest lesson of the Christian life -- to cease from themselves. The greatest danger about these men was not in what they might fail to do, but in what they might try to do. The greatest harm that we can do is the attempt to do anything at all when we are not prepared, and when we do not understand our Master's will. Suppose a regiment of soldiers should start off without their captain's orders, or their necessary equipment or artillery; the next attempt of the army would be rendered more hopeless by their rash exposure and needless failure.

And so the Master wants to keep us from doing anything, until we are prepared to go forth in His strength and victory. Our hardest lesson to learn is to unlearn, and to know our utter helplessness and wretchedness.

The deepest experience into which they had to enter was self-crucifixion, and crucifixion is the death not only of the evil self, but of the strong and self-sufficient self.

Peter had not yet learned to be still, for before these waiting days were over we find him rushing again to the front, and proposing the election of a new disciple, without the divine direction or recognition. The best that can be said of his work is that it did no harm if it did no good, for God never afterwards seems to have recognized the apostle that Peter led the brethren to choose, but in His own time He called His own apostle.

And so it was necessary that these days should be spent in waiting and learning to be silent, and forming the habit of the suspension of our own activity, and the dependence of our will entirely upon the direction of the Holy Ghost. There are times when the most masterly thing we can exercise is inactivity, and there are times when the most mischievous thing we can do is to do anything at all.

That is a most instructive story that is told of the nervous passenger on board a vessel in a dangerous storm, who was running about the deck in every direction, and asking the captain what he could do to save the ship from going to the bottom; at last the captain, more alarmed by him than by the tempest, fearing that he would drive the passengers into a panic, called him to his side and said, "Yes, you can help me immensely if you will just hold that rope hard and firm; and don't let it go until I tell you!" He eagerly grasped the rope and held it tight and steady until the storm was past, and then he walked about the deck boasting that he had saved the ship, until the captain, hearing of this, came up and, looking at him with a twinkle in his eye, said, "Why, do you know the reason I gave you that rope to hold was to keep you quiet? The only good you did by holding on so steadily was that you were kept from doing any mischief."

Ah, how much mischief we do by doing our own work! How long it took God to teach Abraham to be still! How long Abraham tried to help God to the fulfillment of His own promise! Then he got Sarah into his counsel, and then he took Hagar into partnership, and out of it came Ishmael. Out of Ishmael came nothing but sorrow and hindrance, until, after a quarter of a century had been spent, God quietly fulfilled His own promise in His own way.

How long it took Moses to learn to be still! Forty years he had to wait in the desert until all his young-mannishness had died, and his precocious activity had been changed into modesty and even timidity; then, when Moses shrank back and asked God to send someone else, Moses was small enough and still enough for God to use for His people's deliverance. And so, when he came to the gates of deliverance, his first lesson was to "stand still and see the salvation of God;" to do nothing but wait for Him, and then God stepped upon the scene, and did the work Himself.

God cannot use us until we come to the end of ourselves, and see our utter worthlessness, and helplessness, and then put on His mighty strength, and go forth, crying, "I am not sufficient even to think anything as of myself; but my sufficiency is of God."

### III.

These waiting days were necessary to enable the disciples to realize their need, their nothingness, their failure and their dependence upon the Master. They had to get emptied first, before they could get filled. Oh, how often they must have thought, as those days went by, of the positions they were now to occupy, the responsibility that was resting upon them, the charge that the Master had committed to them, and their utter inability for it all! How they must have recalled their folly, their unbelief, their strife, their selfishness, their fears, their defeats, and shrunk back into nothingness, and even stood aghast at the prospect before them, until in the very dust they cried to Him for help and strength needed.

And so God wants us to go apart and quietly wait upon Him, until He searches into the depths of our being, and shows us our folly, our failures, our need. There is no wiser nor better thing to do on the eve of a season of blessing than to make an inventory, not of our riches, but of our poverty; to count up all the voids and vacuums and places of insufficiency; to make the valley full of ditches, and then to bring to God the depths of our need for Him to fill.

And it takes time to make this work thorough. It takes time to burn it into our consciousness. It takes time to make us feel it. It is one thing to know in a general way our need and failure; it is quite another thing to realize it, to mourn over it, to be distressed about it, and to be filled with sorrow and shame and that holy zeal and revenge upon ourselves which the apostle tells us is part of true repentance.

In the golden stairway of the Beatitudes, the first promise is to those that are poor in spirit; but there is another step still deeper down on the way to God, and that is "Blessed are they that mourn." It is needful that we shall mourn over our poverty, that we shall realize our need, that we shall be deeply troubled over our spiritual wretchedness, and that we shall come with such hunger that nothing less than all the fullness of Christ can ever satisfy us again.

There are some spiritual conditions that cannot be accomplished in a moment. The breaking up of the fallow ground takes time; the frosts of winter are as necessary as the rains of spring to prepare the soil for fertility. God has to break our hearts to pieces by the slow processes of His discipline, and grind every particle to powder, and then to mellow us, and saturate us with His blessed Spirit, until we are open for the blessing He has to give us. Oh, let us wait upon the Lord with brokenness of heart, with openness of soul, with willingness of spirit, to hear what God the Lord will say!

### IV.

These days of waiting are important also that we may listen to God's voice. We are so busy that we cannot hear. We talk so much that we give Him no chance to talk to us. He wants us to hearken to what He has to say to us. He wants us on our faces before Him, that He may give us His thought, His prayer, His longing, and then lead us into His better will.

And if He keeps us waiting long, we know the message when it comes will be worth all the delay. "If He tarry, let us wait for Him." Only a few times did He speak to Abraham. Only a few times did He speak to Paul. But these were messages that will live forever, and their echoes have sounded through all the years,

and will resound from the ages yet to come.

Let us wait upon God, not so much in prayer as in hearkening.

V.

God wants us to wait upon Him also that we may realize not only our need, but His fullness and His will for us. He wants to show us the vision of the future as well as of the past. He wants to open to us the treasures of His grace, and make us know all the riches of the glory of His inheritance in us.

He wants to lift up our eyes northward and southward and eastward and westward, and then say to us, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it."

He wants to give us the vision of the King in His beauty and the land of far distances. He wants to reveal to us yet unexplored regions of glorious advances in the life of faith. He wants to call us to higher service, and show us mightier resources and enabling for the work of life.

Oh, it is so sweet to wait upon the Lord and dwell on high, to survey the mountain peaks of His glorious grace and look out on the boundless fullness of His promises and His power, and to hear Him say, "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee" not merely the things thou hast seen, but "great and hidden things which thou knowest not!"

This is the waiting to which He is calling us today. God grant that these days before us may bring the vision, and then the victory!

VI.

Waiting on the Lord is not only a preparation for the Holy Spirit, but is a process of receiving the Holy Spirit. There is a cumulative power in waiting prayer to bring the answer and the blessing, breath by breath and moment by moment. God's blessing is too vast and our capacity is too great to be filled in a moment. We must drink, and drink, and drink again, and yet again, if we would know all the fullness of the river of His grace.

Take an ash barrel, and begin to pour into it a bucket of water, and your whole bucket will be exhausted before the water has made the slightest impression; the ashes will be as dry as at first, and you can pour bucket after bucket, and still the ashes be as dry as ever. It is only when the barrel has been filled that at last you see the first trace of the water you have been pouring in. That ash heap was so dry that it could only be saturated by degrees from the bottom upwards; and it is only when the whole body has been saturated, that the first evidence appears.

And so our hearts are so dry, that we need to wait upon the Lord for days and days before there is any impression. But all the while the dry ground is filling, and the thirsty soil is absorbing, and after the waiting is completed we shall know that it was not in vain; we shall realize that not one breath of prayer was vainly spent; we shall find that every moment was storing up the treasures of His grace and power in the depths of our being.

Beloved, we do not wait enough upon the Lord. We do not spend sufficient time at the Mercy Seat. We allow the rush and hurry of life to drive us off, and we lose time instead of gaining it, by our reckless haste.

Yes, that is an instructive old story about the horseman pursued by his foes, who found his trusted charger beginning to fail in the race, for one of the shoes upon his feet had been detached, and he was slipping upon the rocky path. Suddenly the horseman dismounted at the blacksmith shop, where the two ways met, and although he could see his pursuers over yonder hill, bearing down upon him, yet he waited long enough to shoe his horse. He called to the blacksmith, "Be quick," as he threw him a coin of tenfold value; and the sweating workman filed and hammered and clinched the nails, and did his work fast and well. And when the last nail was turned, and the fugitive leaped into his saddle, the hoofs of his pursuers were thundering just behind him, and he heard their shouts of triumph, as they felt they had secured their prey.

But no! he leaped into his saddle, plunged his spurs into his horse's haunches, and dashed away like the lightning, because he was now prepared for the journey.

Ah yes, he gained by losing time, and would have lost all by going before he was prepared. O, beloved, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." "Wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of Him." "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

Without the Holy Ghost you are unequal to the journey of life; you are unfit for the service of the Master; you are unwarranted in attempting to preach the gospel, or to win a soul for Christ, and you are unprepared for the future which He is immediately opening to you. Oh, let us wait at His feet; let us learn our weakness; let us realize our nothingness; let us get emptied for His filling, and then baptized with the Holy Ghost or filled anew with His utmost fullness; and we shall go forth not to our work, but to His, and find that "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. To whom be glory now and forever. Amen."

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