

# Worship - Waiting on God

by Christian Weiss

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of waiting on God through stillness and silence in prayer for true communion with Him.*

**Scripture:** Joshua 10:12, Psalm 37:7, Psalm 62:5, Isaiah 40:28, Habakkuk 2:20, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Hebrews 4:16, James 4:8, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Waiting On God"

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## Description

Christian Weiss preaches on the importance of waiting on God in prayer, highlighting the concept of stillness and silence before the Lord as a crucial aspect of genuine prayer. He emphasizes the need to quiet our hearts, search our inner thoughts, and humble ourselves before God during this time of waiting. Weiss explains that silent waiting on God allows for communion with Him, where we listen for His voice before presenting our petitions, and encourages believers to practice this both in private and public prayer.

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## Transcript

"Waiting on God" is Isaiah's definition of fervent, effectual prayer. The prophet wrote: "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:28-31).

There are several senses in which we wait on God, but to most believers "waiting on God" means waiting on Him in prayer. This concept of prayer is emphasized in the Bible, where very often prayer and waiting on God are equated. In a certain sense, a true Christian is always waiting on God; but in a special sense, waiting refers to prayer.

It is interesting to observe that in what the Bible says concerning waiting on God, ten Hebrew and Greek words are employed. We need to note some of these words, for they have quite different meanings.

### Stillness

In Psalm 62:5 we read: "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." In verse 1 the psalmist wrote: "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation." And in Psalm 65:1 he

wrote: "Praise waiteth for thee, O God ' in Sion." The word "wait" in these verses is translated from two words that are derived from a Hebrew root word which does not basically convey the idea of "waiting" but rather "being still" or "being quiet." Derivatives of this word are translated this way in a number of places in the Bible.

The root word is familiar to me from the Arabic language, and it is fairly easy to remember. It is dum, like "dumb," meaning "to be silent." In our language we have come to apply the word "dumb" to a person who is not very intelligent. This is probably because of the connection with the German word dumm, meaning "stupid," "dull" or "silly." But the basic meanings of the English word "dumb" refer to mute persons who are unable or unwilling to speak.

"Wait thou only upon God" signifies "be silent" or "only be silent" before God. We are to be still before Him. "Wait" sometimes means "to cease" or "to stop" whatever action may have been taking place. It behooves us to stop and pray. We should cease other activities before we come into the presence of God.

Sometimes this word is translated "stand still." When Joshua said to the sun, "Sun, stand thou still (Josh. 10:12), he used a word that is derived from dum. He was saying, "Sun, be still, stop, cease--just wait where you are." "My soul, wait thou only upon God" (Ps. 62:5) is the equivalent of saying, "My soul, be thou silent unto the Lord; remain still in the presence of the Lord; stop what you are doing, and seek the Lord."

In Psalm 37:7 we read: "Rest in the Lord." "Rest" comes from the same word, dum. The instruction is "Be silent before the Lord, or unto the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." The word "wait" here is an entirely different word, which will be considered later.

Words derived from dum are translated "silent" or "silence" 12 times in the King James Version. Six times it is translated "still," and twice it is translated "rest." Of course "to rest" means to stop and be still.

In his book *The Praying Christ*, James G. S. S. Thomson makes this statement: "Stillness of heart is an important and essential factor in our waiting before the Lord in prayer." We all know this from personal experience. I do not think you can really start to pray until you have stopped to be quiet and still before the Lord. I know there are times when you can, and even must, pray on the run. Someone once said to D. L. Moody when a building was on fire, "Let us pray." Moody replied, "We'll pray while passing the water buckets."

To really pray is not a matter of dashing into the presence of God, "spitting out" to Him what is on our minds, and then dashing away again. We will never get very far in prayer that way. I sometimes think the Lord purposely gives us times of stillness in the night. Normally I sleep well, but sometimes I think the Lord awakens me so I can talk with Him, because in the night a person can truly be still and utterly quiet. This is especially true in the early hours of the morning before noise begins in the streets. Even the birds are at rest during this time. I believe God tries to teach us throughout our lives that to wait upon Him requires quietness and stillness. Spoken words are not enough; silent worship constitutes genuine prayer.

The Prophet Habakkuk said, "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20). I had become distressed by the fact that in our own church there was much commotion and loud talking going on prior to the worship service, even after the organist had begun to play. One Sunday when I was in the pulpit, I mentioned this and asked that the people try to observe silence. As soon as the organ music started, they were to stop conversation and commotion and prepare their hearts to worship

the Lord. After the service, one of the men of the church commended me warmly for this. "I am glad you said that," he told me. "You know, I am an usher, and this thing has griped me for a long time. " But that same Sunday night, I preached again in the church. And again, even after the first hymn had been announced, there was audible talking going on in the rear. And, to my astonishment, it was the very man who had commended me that morning!

Another statement from author Thomson says, "The loss of the secret of silence and stillness in worship and adoration impoverishes our devotional lives and renders ineffective much of our waiting on God in prayer." Our minds are human, and they operate in human patterns. It is necessary for us to be quiet and still and to stop our minds from wandering all over the globe and all over the things we are engaged in if we are to properly prepare for prayer.

As we have seen, "wait on the Lord" often means "be silent before the Lord." It is necessary that we collect our thoughts and quiet our hearts for worship and adoration before we can truly pray.

It is during this time of stillness that we must search our hearts and examine our inner thoughts. This often humbles us greatly before the Lord, but humility is an indispensable prerequisite of prayer. During this time we also become conscious of sin in our lives, and we can confess this and get it cleared away so that we can really pray.

This time of stillness is also a time when we can just contemplate God, think of who He is, look into His face, reflect upon His grace and power, and prepare our souls for true communion with Him.

It is during stillness and quietness, before we speak to God in petition, that He has a chance to speak to us. We are prone to think that prayer is man doing all the talking. But some of our best and most effective prayer periods are those in which we do not say anything but just let God do the talking. This is communion, not mere petition.

Silent waiting on God is good preparation for both private and public prayer. The old Quakers met together in their homes for worship, and for a certain time they just sat in silence to let God first talk to them. After this someone would perhaps pray aloud, comment on a verse of Scripture, give a testimony, or announce a hymn to be sung. The Plymouth Brethren have practiced this from their very beginning, and it is still customary among them to do this. Their practice is to meet on the Lord's Day morning around the Lord's Table, without any planned service, to have a quiet time in the presence of the Lord. I have been at many of these meetings and can testify that when the Spirit of God is present in a group of believers, it is wonderful. But if the glory of God has departed, it is the most boring thing you can imagine.

Most churches have moved so far away from this practice that if there is a time of silence in their prayer meetings, everybody gets fidgety and restless and wonders why someone doesn't pray. I wish we could get over this! I think if we were conscious of the Spirit of God in our midst, there would be no embarrassment and no frustration or irritation in the times of silence. But we must really be in communion with Him and allow Him to talk to us. I fear many of us are far away from the idea and habit of being silent before the Lord, especially in our public worship. In both public and private prayer, silence is essential to true contact with God.

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