

Taking Time to Wait on God

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince emphasizes the necessity of waiting on God and recognizing the headship of Christ for spiritual growth and direction.

Duration: 1:08:11

Scripture: Psalm 118:13

Topics: "Waiting"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus and being able to hear Him speak. The speaker discusses the four main functions of a head, which are to receive input, make decisions, initiate action, and coordinate the activity of the members. The speaker also highlights the characteristic of God as one who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him. The sermon concludes with a call for the church to learn to wait on God and to fall in love with Jesus as the center and focus of their lives.

Transcript

His mercies, you know, are new every morning. His compassions fail not. The longer I live, the more I see how indebted I am to the mercy of God.

So we're going to make a confession, or a proclamation, which really is our testimony summed up briefly. Taken from Psalm 118, verses 13 through 18. Now the words that started are addressed to the enemy, they're not addressed to God.

So don't be surprised. You pushed me violently that I might fall, but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation.

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tense of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted.

The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

How many of you anticipate the Lord's chastening? The Bible says He chastens every son whom He receives. If you are without chastening, you're not a true son, you're illegitimate. As I've said, we've been through some real hard struggles.

We're not the only ones. We know that many of you here have been through them, too. We were in New Zealand about three years ago for some meetings.

We were meeting with our international directors. Ruth and I were located in a motel. She was having the most intense intestinal pain.

I was there kind of not knowing what to do. She began talking to the Lord. She said, Lord, I commit the family to you.

Then she said, Lord, I commit the ministry to you. Then she said, Lord, I commit Derek to you. I thought to myself, I'd better do something quickly.

I phoned some brothers and they came around immediately and prayed. Ruth was raised up but she was really at death's door at that moment. Later on, God directed us to take a sabbatical of six months in Hawaii.

We went on this sabbatical with great anticipations of a wonderful time in the beautiful climate of Hawaii, in a condominium that we owned just above the Pacific. We envisaged Bible study and prayer and fellowship. It turned out to be some of the hardest months of our lives.

In the course of it I became progressively more and more sick. The doctors really couldn't discover what was wrong with me. Eventually, a clever doctor diagnosed what is called subacute bacterial endocarditis.

It ceased to be subacute after a while. I ended up spending seventeen days in the hospital and six weeks on intravenous antibiotics. It may not sound spiritual, but I thank God for antibiotics.

You know that? There was a time in my life many years ago when I thought I'd never need medicine. God delivered me from that pride. We went there because we felt we'd come to the end of one phase of our ministry and I'd handed over the administration of the ministry to my son-in-law.

We wanted to know what God had for us next in our lives. So we thought if we gave him six months that will be wonderful. It seemed a very long time to us to take six months away from ministry.

Well, at the end of six months we had heard nothing from God about our future. He had spent all that time dealing with problems in us that prevented us from being ready to hear and respond to what He had to say next. I don't intend to go into detail, but if a preacher speaks about problems people always conclude it's one or other of three things.

It's either immorality or alcohol or misappropriation of funds. That was not it. But there are plenty of other ways that Christians can block God's purpose for their lives.

And I have a deep concern for all of you here tonight. I watched you enjoying the pageant and rejoicing in the beautiful music. But to tell you the truth, I'm confident that many of you are not where you ought to be with God right now.

Statistically I think that's absolutely sure. So my desire is to help you--not to accuse you, not to condemn you, but to help you. After we'd come through this period, a dear brother in the Lord said this to me.

He said, Your decision to take a sabbatical saved your life. Because if you had gone on traveling and ministry you wouldn't have had the opportunity to have the close medical supervision that eventually

discovered your problem. You would have died.

And I want to say to some of you, it could well be that if you go on being as busy as you are, with as little time for waiting on God as you have, you will die when you don't need to. The gospel is a serious message. It's a message of life and death.

Now, the theme that was allotted for this conference was dwelling in His presence. Because I was away in Israel and in Britain I didn't get the theme. But I felt the Lord gave me a message.

And had I known the theme it couldn't have been better suited to the message. I want to speak tonight for a while on something that I think is radically out of place in the body of Christ. I'm not saying in every part of the body of Christ, but in most of the body of Christ there is something that is out of place.

And it's a very important part of the body, it's the head. In Ephesians 1, the last two verses, God says that He put all things under the feet of Jesus and gave Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body. There's an interesting difference in language.

God put all things under the feet of Jesus. They were subjected. But when it relates to the position of Christ, He gave Christ the most wonderful gift He could give.

It was not subjection, it was not domination, it was the most precious and wonderful blessing that He could offer to the body was to have Jesus as head. And He's head over all things. Not over a few things, not over most things, but over all things.

And I'm going to deal in a moment with the functions of a head. But I just want to ask you right now, could you honestly say in the presence of God, Jesus is head over everything in my life? There is nothing that's outside His control. There's nothing which is not the expression of His determined will for me.

In Ephesians 4, verses 15 and 16, Paul writes, and it's the middle of one of his long sentences, he says, Speaking the truth in love, or being honest in love, we may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Notice, the whole body depends on the head. And it's only through its relationship to the head that the body derives nourishment and is able to grow and function effectively.

If the relationship to the head is impaired, the whole life of the body is automatically impaired. And then in Colossians chapter 2, and verses 18 and 19, Paul says, Let no one defraud you of your reward, or let no one disqualify you, would be a better word. Don't lose what God intends you to have.

But this person who defrauds takes delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. What I would call a super-spiritual person who claims to be super-spiritual but is actually very carnal. And Paul says, Don't let such a person deceive you and cheat you out of your rightful inheritance.

And then he says of such a person in the next verse, verse 19, Not holding fast to the head from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase which is from God. The NIV says, Having lost connection with the head. As soon as we lose connection with the head we are headed for error, some form of deception, some kind of false teaching, something that is out of line with the truth of God.

The only condition of safety for the body, collectively, for each believer, individually, is to be rightly related to the head. Every true believer has a divinely prepared direct connection with the head, Jesus Christ. Let no one ever interfere with your personal connection with the head.

Pastors are wonderful people but they cannot take the place of Jesus. The function of a pastor is not to be your head, it's to help you cultivate your relationship with the One who is your head. It's not to tell you the answers to all your problems, it's to show you how to find the answer for yourself from Jesus.

Some people are lazy, they just want some human being to solve all their problems. It doesn't work that way. And some leaders are despotic, they want to take control of people.

I've been through all that and thank God I've come out of it and I have no desire to be in it again. You have to have your own personal relationship with Jesus. You have to be able to hear Him speak to you.

You have to be able to be directed by Him. You have to have something inside you that tells you when He's pleased and when He's not pleased. You have to be sensitive to the head.

Now I want to speak about four functions of a head. This is not a lesson in physiology. I'm not competent to give one.

These are just simple, practical perspectives. In my way of thinking, a head, or the head, has four main functions. First of all, to receive input.

Every part of the body has a right to communicate with the head and the head receives communication. Number two, to make decisions. The head decides what the body is to do.

Number three, to initiate action. And the key word is initiative, because the one who takes the initiative is the head. And number four, having taken the initiative to coordinate the activity of the members carrying out the decision of the head.

I'll say those just once again, because I want you to be considering your own relationship with Jesus and also considering the relationship of the body, the church, as you know it today here in America. All right, here are the four functions. Number one, to receive input.

Number two, to make decisions. Number three, to initiate action. And again I want to say the word initiative is a key word.

And number four, to coordinate the activity of the other members as they carry out the decision of the head. Now in the body of Jesus Christ, the church, the headship of Jesus is effective only through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only means by which Jesus can communicate with the body, direct the body, control the body and preserve the body.

So we are talking not merely about a relationship with Jesus but what goes with that, a relationship with the Holy Spirit. I'll give you just a few of many Scriptures along that line. In John chapter 16, verses 12 through 15, Jesus is taking farewell of His disciples and He says, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth. So Jesus is saying, I can't tell you everything you need to know now, you're not in the condition to receive anymore, you're already overwhelmed by what I've told you. But that doesn't matter because the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit is

coming and He will guide you.

He will take over from me your direction. It's interesting that the translation says when He, the Spirit of truth has come. Because the original text is Greek and those of you that know anything about genders, there are three genders in Greek, masculine, feminine and neuter--he, she or it.

Now the Greek word for spirit, pneuma, is neuter. So the normal pronoun would be it. But the rules of grammar are broken to put in the pronoun he.

Why? To emphasize the Holy Spirit is a person. He's not just something he is someone. And you can't relate rightly to the Holy Spirit if you merely relate to Him as an it.

He's a he. He's a person. God the Father is a person, Jesus Christ the Son is a person and the Holy Spirit is a person.

And Jesus says from this time forward my relationship with you will be effected through the Holy Spirit. And then He goes on to say, For he will not speak from himself, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will tell you things to come. I believe the church should have direction concerning the future.

Supernatural direction from the Holy Spirit. Not everything, but the things we need to know. My personal view of the world's situation is that a church that goes into the future without the Holy Spirit to guide is going into disaster.

I think we have only just glimpsed the troubles and the pressures that are coming on the whole world and not least on the United States of America. And we are going to need the Holy Spirit to warn us of things that are going to happen so we won't be in the wrong place at the wrong time. One of the prayers that Ruth and I pray continually is to be always in the right place at the right time.

But only the Holy Spirit can make that possible. Then it says in verse 14, He, the Holy Spirit, will glorify me. And please note that's one distinctive mark of the Holy Spirit.

There's a whole lot of things in the charismatic movement which are said to be the work of the Holy Spirit but they lack the mark of glorifying Jesus. Anything that exalts a human personality is not from the Holy Spirit. It may be spiritual but it's not from the Holy Spirit.

Bear that in mind. Whatever the Holy Spirit does, His ultimate aim is always to glorify Jesus. If Jesus is not in the center of the stage, the scenario was not from the Holy Spirit.

That's enough I think of that passage. Let's go on to Romans 8, verse 14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

The word there is not a child but a grown-up son. How can you live as an adult Christian? There's only one way, to be regularly led by the Spirit of God. It's what we call in English a continuing present tense.

Those who are regularly or continually led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God. Some of the people who talk most about the Holy Spirit know least about being led by Him. I've been a Pentecostal for more than fifty years.

I'm not ashamed of it, I thank God for Pentecostals. I owe my salvation to them. But the people who say, I was baptized in the Holy Spirit in 1986 and I spoke in tongues and that's it, are probably far out of touch

with the Holy Spirit today.

It's not a one-time experience, it's an ongoing relationship. I'm sorry to keep coughing, you'll have to pray harder. 2 Corinthians 3, 17.

Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. The Lord in the New Testament is equivalent to the sacred name Jehovah or whatever you want to call it in the Old. So not merely is God the Father Lord, not merely is Jesus Christ the Son Lord, but the Holy Spirit is Lord.

He Himself is God. And where He is Lord, there is liberty or freedom. Again, with my background in Pentecostalism, I've seen the snare that many fall into and charismatics just follow them.

Assuming that because you got blessed through dancing and jumping last time, every time you want to get blessed you have to dance and jump. Brothers and sisters, that's not liberty, that's bondage. Liberty is doing what the Holy Spirit directs at any given time and any given place.

And there's a lot of variety in the Holy Spirit. He's got more than one act. And then in Ephesians 2, two verses, verse 18 and verse 22.

For through Him, that's Jesus Christ, through Jesus, we both, that's Jews and Gentiles, have access by one Spirit to the Father. Notice all three persons of the Godhead there. Through Jesus, by the Spirit, to the Father.

That's the way up. Verse 22, In whom, that's in Jesus, you also are being built together for a habitation or a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. So in Jesus, God dwells in us by the Spirit.

God indwells by the Spirit those who are in Jesus. Both directions, upward and downward, the link is the Holy Spirit. If you miss out the Holy Spirit, there's no connection.

You can have all sorts of good doctrine and religious activity, but if the Holy Spirit isn't there, you have no contact with God. He is the only way by which we can contact God. Now I want to discuss briefly with you the issue of initiative.

And I want to come to the point where I apply it very personally. One of the words that's used again and again in the Bible is the word choose or choice. And I'm not going into it doctrinally, but the truth of the matter is, we are the product of God's choice.

If God hadn't chosen us, we'd never become believers. The initiative did not proceed from us. It came from God.

How many of you know that? You didn't get saved because you were trying hard. You got saved because God decided to save you. And if He hadn't decided to save you, you could have done whatever you liked but you'd never been saved.

That's humbling because it shuts us up to total dependence on God, which is just what we're all afraid of. Now Jesus said to His apostles in John 15 verse 16, You did not choose me but I chose you. That's very clear, isn't it? There's no doubt about that.

You didn't make the choice, I made the choice. I don't think that's the choice for salvation, that's the choice for apostleship. He said, I've chosen you twelve.

Then He said, One of you is a devil. That's a remarkable thing to say, wasn't it? That's something to ponder over but we won't go into it. Then He said, You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you or placed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain that whatever you ask the Father in my name He may give you.

I understand from that, that the only enduring fruit proceeds out of the choice of God. Only that which God has chosen will produce enduring fruit. You can have all sorts of religious elections and programs in the church and religious activities, but if God didn't initiate them there will be no permanent fruit whatever.

And then Jesus also said, And whatever you ask the Father in my name He may give you. You understand that to be able to pray effectively to the Father proceeds out of the choice of God. We can pray all sorts of prayers but if they don't proceed out of the choice of God we have no assurance that God will answer them.

I sense myself, this is my impression, that God is urgently dealing with the church in the United States to bring us back to the place where we realize our total dependence on God. I think we've had a measure of success in the charismatic movement. I wouldn't call it a movement any longer because I don't think it's moving.

But we have had a measure of success. But we've forgotten that it all came from the mercy of God. We didn't deserve it.

It wasn't because we were clever, or spiritual, or well educated, or country hicks. It wouldn't matter. So initiative is expressed through choice.

So the only things, as I understand it, in our lives where God is really involved are the things which God has chosen. I think that applies to marriage. If you're considering getting married, my advice to you would be, marry the person of God's choice.

Find out. Don't make your own decision. I've been married twice.

My first wife is with the Lord, my second wife is here with me, my first marriage lasted thirty years, and our present marriage has lasted fourteen years. Both have been happy and successful. And not a lot of people can say that in the world today.

The reason is, God chose. I didn't. I've never chosen a wife.

I'm not saying everybody has to have it that way, but that's the way it was with me. God knew I wasn't intelligent enough to make the right choice. I say that sincerely.

When it comes to abstract reasoning, I'm successful. When it comes to understanding people, I'm at a loss. So God very directly intervened and overruled in each situation, and in neither instance was I trying to get married, either.

Listen, young women and young men, I've never dated but I've been married happily twice. You don't have to date in order to get married. That applies to older people too.

I'm not saying it's wrong to date, but don't depend on dating, depend on God. Excuse me. That's what happens when you have that microphone in front of your nose.

But the alternative would be worse. So we turn to Acts chapter 1, just before the day of Pentecost. The eleven remaining apostles had assembled in Jerusalem with a lot of other people.

But then there was one missing because there had to be twelve. I really don't know exactly why there had to be twelve, but there had to be twelve. Because there were going to be twelve foundations in the New Jerusalem and twelve gates to the city and anyhow.

So the apostles knew they needed one more because Judas had dropped out. So Peter says, he's the leader, in Acts 1 verse 21, Therefore of these men who have accompanied us all the time, the Lord Jesus who went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when Jesus was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection. So there were certain basic qualifications.

There had to be people who had been present all through the ministry of Jesus from the baptism of John to His resurrection. There had to be people who had witnessed Him after His resurrection until the time of His ascension. So, they checked over the people and they proposed two--verse 23--Joseph called Basabas who was surnamed Justice, and Matthias.

Now both of those fulfilled all the required qualifications. But only one of them was chosen by God. And what was important to them was to find out whom God had chosen.

And now this would not be considered spiritual in Baptist circles. Actually, I think the Living Bible says they tossed a coin. It says here they drew lots but it's the same thing.

Why? Because they'd come to the point where their own understanding could take them no further. They knew it had to be one of the two. They didn't know which.

The thing that mattered was God's choice. How find God's choice? Well, draw straws or toss a coin. I'm telling you that because I want you to see how totally different the perspective of the early church was on this issue.

What mattered was God's choice. Any legitimate way of finding that out was all right. So it says they proposed two.

They prayed and said, You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two you have chosen. To take part in this ministry. And they cast their lots and the lot fell on Matthias.

And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. He became the twelfth apostle. But you see, the thrust of everything in the whole area of apostleship, from the choice of Jesus to the choice of Matthias, was God's choice.

Because God's choice expresses God's initiative and God's initiative expresses God's headship. And any time we take the initiative out of the hands of God, we have shut off the headship of Jesus. We have been actually extremely presumptuous.

May God forgive us. Basically I think the church is going to have to come on its face before God and say, God, we have been totally presumptuous and we repent and we ask you to forgive us. Take one other pattern from the book of Acts.

Acts chapter 13, verses 1, 2 and 3. Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers. Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and Saul. Five men went in.

They were all prophets and teachers. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. The NIV says, As they worshipped the Lord and fasted.

The Greek says, As they conducted their priestly ministry to the Lord. Could be worship, could be something else. But while they were waiting on the Lord, they hadn't got any agenda of their own.

The Holy Spirit said, This is my agenda. How many times does the church come to God with its own agenda and never once ask God, What is your agenda? God is not a rubber stamp. You can't make your decisions, write them out in the minutes, and then get the name of God as a rubber stamp, because God is not a rubber stamp.

He's God. It says again, Then having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So where did the decision come from? It came from God.

By whom? By the Holy Spirit. That's right. Now before they were sent out by the Holy Spirit, they were prophets and teachers.

What were they after they were sent out? Apostles, that's right. They're called apostles twice. In Acts 14 verse 4, The multitude of the city was divided, part side with the Jews and part with the apostles.

And verse 14, But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard this. So there is a way for apostolic ministry to emerge if we can acknowledge that there are prophets and teachers. An apostle is one who is sent forth.

Anybody who has not been sent forth cannot be an apostle. Interestingly, although the initiative proceeded from God the Father by Jesus Christ the Son through the Holy Spirit, they were not called apostles before the church had sent them out. God does not bypass the church in appointing ministries.

Now I'd like to read just the final statement about this ministry. In Acts 14 verse 26. This is the end of the ministry.

From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. They came together called the church together and reported. It's very right normally for people who are sent out to do something to report back to the people who sent them out.

That is to be answerable, to be responsible. But what really blessed me years ago when I read this was that they'd been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed or fulfilled. And I said to myself, how many of us in the church today can say we have completed the work that we were assigned to? Not just done part of it, but done the whole job.

And my explanation is because the initiative proceeded from God. Anything else will not produce the same result. Now let me turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. I don't suppose anybody here has a Phillips New Testament, do you, by any chance? I have one but I haven't been at home.

I don't want to misquote him. But 1 Corinthians 2.16 says, For who has known the mind of the Lord that He may instruct him? That's a quotation from the Old Testament. How many of us are in a position to instruct the Lord, to give Him advice, to tell Him how to do things? The answer I think is nobody.

It's what they call a rhetorical question. We know the answer. Then it says, But we have the mind of Christ.

Now why I wanted to quote Phillips was because I think he says, Amazing though it may seem, we have the mind of Christ. Now that's typical Phillips, he's just expanded something. But I think it's a very worthwhile rendering.

Amazing though it may seem, we have the mind of Christ. What I want to say is, it's we, it's not I. The mind of Christ is not given to one single individual. It's given to the body by the head.

And until the body learns to find the mind of Christ, it will go largely undiscovered. Can we say, can you say in your particular fellowship or church, we have the mind of Christ? Would you even contemplate that question? Does it occur to you that we should be able to say that? If we can't say it, who can? Aren't we the charismatics? Aren't we the people that are filled with the Holy Spirit, with a few leaks? Where are the people who have the mind of Christ? How can we become that people? I believe there's a very simple answer. And I've begun to see it work.

I can't say I've seen it work totally, but I've seen enough to feel that I'm on my way to the answer. And I'll say there's one key word, very unpopular word amongst American Christians. The word we least like to hear.

Some of you can guess what it is. Wait. Not work, but wait.

We are so work-oriented, we work ourselves to death. But that's only half of the gospel. Let me give you just two examples.

First of all, in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 9 and 10. 1 Thessalonians 1, 9 and 10. Paul is writing to these who were some of the earliest Christians, probably one of the first letters he wrote.

And he's speaking about the impact that the gospel had made in Thessalonica. And he says, They themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you in Thessalonica, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Notice they turned to do two things.

To serve and to wait. That's the totality of the Christian life. Serving is not all of it.

In fact, it's very incomplete. If it's not accompanied by waiting. We serve, we wait.

The Bible in more than fifty places speaks about the need or the necessity of waiting on God or for God. Is anybody on an NIV here? Can I borrow it for a moment? Thank you so much. The reason I've chosen this, I'll give it back in a minute, is that it's translation of Isaiah 64, verse 4 is so vivid.

This is Isaiah 64, verse 4. Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him. So this is a picture of the one true God. What is His distinctive characteristic? He acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.

If you want Him to act on your behalf, you know what you have to do? You have to wait. Thank you so much. May the Lord bless this Bible.

See, I have a passionate conviction that the church is never going to get beyond where it is. In America today, and I'm talking to Americans, that's why I say America. I've just been in Britain.

But my conviction is the church will never get beyond where it is until it learns to wait on God. I was in a small city in England called Hull. There we were there, I think, four years ago.

At the end of my series of meetings I called the leaders up on the platform and prayed for them. Apparently God released something through that. So they've been urging us to go back.

We were back there this past weekend. For four years a group of leaders, representing perhaps fifteen churches now, have been meeting together and waiting on God. Almost unbelievable.

These meetings that we were in, in a way were different from almost any meeting I've ministered in. Not because I was different, but because something had changed in the atmosphere. I preached some very straight messages that only those sins we confess are forgiven.

If we don't confess our sins, they are not forgiven. God is fully ready and waiting to forgive, but he's laid down a condition. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just.

At the end we had about ten couples, without any emotion or hype, I said, Now if you need to confess sins, you can confess them to God. But the Bible also says, Confess your sins one to another that you may be healed. There's one major barrier to healing, is unconfessed sin.

You're free to come down. Well they came down for about two hours, just coming forward one by one to confess their sins. Some of them were quite well-known leaders in that area.

Now to me that's significant. I see it as the fruit of people waiting on God. I hear a lot of prophecies about revival and I may have given some myself.

But without any one thing, we don't have revival until we have it. And we don't have it until we've met the conditions. You can prophesy as much as you like.

But the real barrier to revival is unconfessed sin. And until that's dealt with, you can do as much as you like. You can do all the preaching and all the singing and all the publicity.

But the results will be disappointing. You say, Well I don't think I have any sins. Well wonderful.

But how close have you come to God? You spend a little while waiting in the presence of God. And you may have a different view. See, I'm sharing out of personal experience.

I've never been a backslider, as it's called, quote, backslider. I've served the Lord more than fifty years. And by the grace of God I have seen uncounted numbers of people helped.

But when Ruth and I got alone with God, without any premeditated plan or agenda, it took God six months to clear up the debris in my life. And God showed me things that I had done thirty years previously. He said, You've never confessed it.

And just to help us humble ourselves, Ruth and I confessed to one another. You don't have to do that, always. But the Bible does say, Confess your sins one to another.

Doesn't it? You know that? James 5, verse 16. How would you feel about that? Years and years ago I read the journals of John Wesley. And I discovered in his journals, somewhere in Yorkshire, just about fairly close to where we were preaching.

He said one of the strongest Methodist societies that he knew had grown out of ten people who committed themselves to meet together weekly to confess their faults to one another. That's not the modern plan for starting a church, is it? But after all, the Methodist movement did impact the whole of Britain and most of the United States for one century. So maybe there's something to be said for it.

I feel I'm feeling impressed to read Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2. We're so used to referring these words to the Jews that we sometimes forget they apply to Gentiles also. Isaiah 59, 1 and 2. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot say, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear. God has still got good hearing, and His arm still is powerful.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. Now God is no respecter of persons. It's wonderful to know that we have the right of access to God through the blood of Jesus, when the blood of Jesus cleanses us.

But the blood doesn't cleanse those who don't confess. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. There are three continuing present tenses.

If we continually walk in the light, we continually have fellowship with one another, and the blood continually cleanses. But they are conditional. The first word is if.

If we walk in the light. My comment in that is this. Out of fellowship, out of the light.

If you're not in fellowship, you're not in the light. Because if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another. And if we're out of fellowship, the blood is not cleansing us.

The blood does not cleanse in the dark. It only cleanses in the light. And if we've been in the dark and we want to be cleansed, we have to come to the light.

For the blood cleanses in the light, but not in the dark. I personally believe, this is entirely a personal opinion, that God will never have His way with the church in America until the leaders of the church take time to wait on God. And I say specifically the leaders.

I'm going to end by reading an account from a friend of mine, a well-known minister, Johannes Fassius, who's the head of international intercessors, a Dane who lives in Germany and speaks English. And he just wrote this newsletter, of which I received a copy, about something that has just happened in Australia. How many of you have been to Australia? Well, the Aussies are a pretty tough crowd, I think you'll agree.

And a breakthrough in Australia, a spiritual breakthrough, would be a remarkable event. And I believe it's coming. And I want to read this account.

I hope it will help you. I just hope my voice will hold up. It's dated September 1992.

A couple of years later I returned from the ends of the earth--Australia--and the most unique gathering of spiritual leaders I have ever attended. After this experience I will never be the same again. And he's a man of mature ministry and experience.

Noel Bell, intercessors for Australia, and Tom Haller, leader of YWAM in Australia, and I know them both, had felt the need to call together pastors, elders, and leaders of ministries from all over Australia to come together to seek the face of the Lord. The conference was called, Leaders Looking Unto Jesus, and the time frame was three weeks. This in itself was a daring step.

How could anyone imagine it being possible for busy spiritual leaders to set aside three whole weeks? When I realized that more than one hundred had responded to this call and saw that most of them stayed for the whole period, I was convinced that it had to be one of the seven wonders of this world. Had anyone proposed to me to do something like this in Europe or in the States, I would have laughed at the thought. If we can get leaders together here for a whole day, we ought to be grateful.

Apparently God must have something special in mind with Australia. And I would not be surprised if a very powerful spiritual awakening would come out of Australia and touch the worldwide body of Christ. Possibly it is the isolation that our Australian friends feel out there at the edge of the globe, coupled with a realization of the hardness and roughness of the Australian heart that have been the main factors moving our friends to cast themselves down before the Lord.

At any rate, no matter how far I go back in living memory, I have not been a part of anything like this before in my years in the ministry. So let me enlighten you with some of the extraordinary things that took place. Then there are a few headings.

Sitting at His feet. This was the way God laid out in picture the purpose of this gathering. To sit at His feet like Mary and not like Martha, try to please Him and serve Him at our own initiative.

To enter into His rest, which is a rest from our own works, just as God having created heaven and earth in six days, rested from His works on the seventh. This proved to be very difficult for all of us. Whenever we tried to sit silently in His presence, only five minutes would pass and someone would not be able to wait any longer but had to break in with a prophecy or a song or a Scripture reading, all proving how hard it is for us to wait and let the Spirit take the initiative.

Praise God we had lots of time before us, three whole weeks, and slowly but surely we learned to just wait until the Spirit would begin to blow with His gentle wind among us. How difficult it is for us to just enjoy God's presence without exercising any kind of activity. The next heading is Beholding His Glory.

2 Corinthians 3.18 became very much alive to us that we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Coming under the entire lordship of the Holy Spirit is equal to coming face to face with Jesus. That's exactly what I was trying to say.

In the light of His glory and perfection we can measure ourselves in all our shortcomings and be exposed to the transforming power of His Spirit, changing us into the image of His dear Son. How different this way is to our own attempts at looking at ourselves and despair over all that is lacking of Christ likeness in our character. God had called us together, not as we had expected, to load on us new knowledge and information, but to change us into the likeness of His dear Son.

Next heading, the vertical way. For me personally a change took place in my whole thinking. As one who has been active in the prayer movement for more than twenty years, I had developed a way of discerning problems and places by help of the information available and using my analytical mind.

By looking unto Jesus and waiting to come face to face with Him, I discovered that any true discernment of any situation only comes when we look at it through His face. If we want a true picture of ourselves, we need to see ourselves the way He looks upon us. If we want to know where the church is standing and how the situation is in our very own nation, we can look at it at the horizontal level and measure it by the outward appearances, but we would end with a wrong and untrue picture.

Only as we behold the face of the Lord and come to understand His burdens for His church and His world, we can apply our prayers or ministries with great effect. The last heading is falling in love with Jesus. When people give themselves to seeking the Lord over a three-week period, one would expect that they would end up by being drawn into intimacy with Him, and so it was.

The overall discovery of this time was a deep realization of how far away from our first love and from the centrality of Christ we had been used to living our lives, even as His servants. Therefore the calling was to enter into the bridal chamber and to fall in love with our heavenly bridegroom, to return to our first love and make Jesus the center and focus of everything we were doing. And so it happened.

As He went on exposing His great and strong love to us, we yielded more and more to Him, and the joy and the worship increased in quality and strength. At the end whole sessions were spent just reveling in His love. We had lost any ambition of being effective and wanted only to be with Him more and more.

The song of Solomon with its many rich pictures of the developing love relationship between the bride and the bridegroom became a guideline for us all the way through. I know that I am using big words when I say that nothing so far in my life can compare with these weeks. But I'm convinced that no matter how big such a statement might sound, it is the truth.

And as I'm writing this newsletter I have a strong desire in my heart to be allowed to continue in this direction, looking unto Jesus. This is also what I wish for all of God's people, that they would have the great joy of being a part of such a gathering in the nearest future. Now I read that simply because I wanted to move out of the realm of theory and into the realm of practical experience.

That's an up-to-date account of what happens when people take time to wait on God. Dear brothers and sisters, I'm convinced that the greatest need in the life of most of you is to take time with God. And I'm persuaded, if I'm sorry to say it, that most of you don't give God much time.

And I think that's a thing of which many of us need to repent. Ruth and I have learned, and this is very, very miniature, we've learned to take one day a week to wait upon God. It's Wednesday.

And we have no idea what will happen. We don't have an agenda, we don't have a prayer list. Sometimes we start by reading the Bible, sometimes we don't.

But at the end of the day we tend to say to ourselves, How did we ever get here? We had no plan or thought of being involved in what we're in at the end of the day. It's time for me to stop. I think I've said all I need to say.

Now I was asked if there was to be ministry at the end. And there are a team somewhere who will come forward and be available for prayer and counseling. Not too much counseling, but prayer.

But I want to invite those of you who really feel that there's a barrier between you and God, that you're not hearing from God the way you would wish, that there's things come in your life between the Lord and you. And you would like to confess them and be free from them today. So if the team would come forward.

Can we do that? You just come forward and stand at the front. Now these are mature men and women of God. They're discreet and trustworthy.

They have proven ministry in lives, if you need to get clear in your relationship with God. I know a lot of you think about physical healing. But let me tell you that is not God's number one priority.

There were some people in these meetings in Yorkshire who were instantly healed when they forgot about healing and determined to get right with God. So there we are. If you want now to come and lay your life before the Lord, just come down.

I'm not going to make any special appeal. Don't be embarrassed. From wherever you are, you feel there's a burden on your heart.

David said, My sins have mounted up over my head. They are a burden to me. Many of you would like to be healed, but you'll never be healed until you've dealt with the sin problem in your life.

So those of you that want to come, by all means come. The rest of you, if you don't need to come, pray for those who do come. After praying for a while you may discover that you need to come.

If you need to leave, please just go out as quickly and as quietly as you can without disturbing others. Now those of you who are intercessors, this is a moment for prayer, because eternal destinies can be settled here tonight. Where's my wife? Ruth, just come and pray with me.

Please note that this is not a moment to tell your life story. It's to come with a specific need and to come out with it specifically.

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