

# Over-Waiting for God

by J.R. Miller

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of balancing waiting for God with the necessity of taking bold action in faith to receive His blessings.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 14:13, Isaiah 40:31

**Topics:** "Waiting On God", "Faith in Action"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of waiting for God while also cautioning against over-waiting, which can lead to missed blessings. He illustrates that impatience can cause us to act prematurely, while at the same time, God often waits for us to take action in faith. Using biblical examples, such as Abraham and the Israelites at the Red Sea, Miller shows that obedience and faith are crucial for receiving God's promises. He warns that waiting too long can be a form of disobedience, and encourages believers to step forward in faith to unlock the blessings God has prepared for them. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a balance between waiting on God and actively pursuing His will.

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## Transcript

A great deal is said in the Bible about waiting for God. The lesson cannot be too strongly enforced. We easily grow impatient of God's delays. Much of our trouble in life comes out of our restless, sometimes reckless, haste.

We cannot wait for the fruit to ripen--but insist on plucking it while it is green, and when it is most unwholesome.

We cannot wait for the story to be written out chapter by chapter; but, in our eagerness to know how it will end, we want to omit the links of its development, and hurry on to the close.

We cannot wait until the picture is completed--but insist on taking our view of it while it is unfinished, and criticizing it as if the artist's work on it were done.

We cannot wait for the answer to our prayers, although the things we ask for, may require long years in their preparation for us. We are exhorted to walk with God; but oftentimes God walks very slowly, and we do not care to linger with him. We are very eager to get forward, and cannot wait. Thus the lesson of waiting for God is always an important one.

But there is another phase of the lesson. God often waits for us. We fail many times to receive the blessing he has ready for us, because we do not go forward with him. While we miss much good through not waiting for God--we also miss much through over-waiting. There are times when our strength is to stand still--but there also are times when we are to go forward with firm step.

There are many divine promises which are conditioned upon the beginning of some action on our part. When we begin to obey--God will begin to bless us; and as we continue in our obedience--his blessing will continue to be given to us. Great things were promised to Abraham--but not one of them could have been obtained by waiting in Chaldea. He must leave home, friends, possessions, and country--and go out into unknown paths, and press on in unflinching obedience, in order to receive the promises.

When the Israelites were beside the Red Sea, shut in by natural walls, pressed by a pursuing army, and in peril of destruction, there were two commands given to Moses, which illustrate both sides of this waiting lesson. In answer to the fear and murmuring of the people, Moses said to them, "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." They had nothing to do just at that moment, but to wait until God should work. But a little later, as Moses was praying to God, there came to him the command, "Why do you cry unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." The duty was no longer one of waiting--but one of rising up from bended knees, and going forward in the way of heroic faith.

Perhaps oftener than we know, do we need the same exhortation. There are times when prayer is not the duty of the hour--but when we must rise from our knees and go afield. We think we are honoring God--by waiting quietly, patiently, and prayerfully until he shall open the way for us; while really we are dishonoring him by lack of present faith and ready obedience. Blessing waits for us, while we are waiting--but it cannot be given to us, until we go forth to get it. Not always is resignation a duty; sometimes it is sin--a sin of indolence, inertness, disobedience, unbelief.

We have a familiar illustration of this teaching, in the story of the Israelites' crossing of the Jordan. The river did not open while the people were waiting in their camps. If they had stayed there, it would not have opened for them at all. They must show their faith in God--by breaking camp, making all preparation for passing over into the Land of Promise, and then beginning their march while yet the river ran to its widest banks! It is remarkable that not until the advance guard of priests came to the very edge of the water--did the river begin to sink away. If the people had waited back in their camps for the opening of the way for them through the river, before they would begin their movement, the way would never have been opened. They held in their own hand, the key to unlock the gate into the Land of Promise, and the gate would not turn on its hinges until they had approached it and unlocked it. That key was faith. They must believe God's promise, that a way would be made for them, and must rise up and move forward--as if there were no intervening river.

Life is full of just such occasions as this. The miracle of the river is a parable for all our common days and our common experiences. Difficulties and obstacles lie before us, seeming to block our way. Beyond these hindrances, are fair fields filled with spiritual beauty and treasure. Honors wait there for us. If only we could pass over--we would be enriched; our life would be nobler, stronger. But between us and those heights of privilege, attainment, and achievement--runs the impassable river. The voice of the divine life within us, calls us to go on to win and possess the fair lands that shine in such radiance before us. But we think of the river, and say, "If God will open the way through it, then I can pass over." Then we sit down in our hampered environment to wait for God to take the obstacle away. But he will never do it, while we wait. We must rise up in the strength of our faith, and say, "The voice of God is calling me, and the hand of God

will make the way for me through these seemingly impassable barriers, to the lofty heights yonder."

When duty calls, we have nothing whatever to do with hindrances and difficulties. It is ours only to obey, even though obedience seem impossible. "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." God waits to come to us with divine help. He will not come while we sit still in weakness and fear; but the moment we begin to try to obey his voice--his power begins to flow into our heart. Then, as we go on, he works in us and with us. He prepares the way for us. The obstacle gives way, to the pressure of our feet. The gate opens, when we put the key of faith into the lock. The river sinks away, as we tread the edge of its waters. The mountains are leveled, as we move on. We pass to the radiant heights that beckon us--and possess our land flowing with milk and honey, in whose hills are rich treasures.

The secret of the failure, or the poor, meager attainment, of so many lives--lies in the lack of bold faith. Men stand on the edge of great possibilities, glorious lands of promise, and wait for God to open the door for them. They wonder why they are shut out of the wide fields, into which they see others entering so triumphantly. They even say that the ways of God are not equal, that life is harder for them than it is for others. They pray that they may get on--and then they wait.

But little comes of their life. They achieve only small results, win only few victories, grow into only feeble strength, accomplish only meager things for God and their fellows; dying at last with little to show that they have lived. Yet all the while God was waiting for them to go on. There was not a river before them all the years that would not have dwindled to a tiny brooklet--if they had gone forward in the venture of heroic faith. There was not an obstacle in all their course, which seemed to make progress impossible for them, that would not have yielded--if they had gone on quietly and firmly as if there were no obstacle.

We do not know how often we are missing the richest blessings of the divine love, because of our over-waiting for God. These blessings are within our reach--God is waiting and longing to give them to us; but, misunderstanding our duty, thinking that the way is not yet open for us--we continue waiting, when we ought to press forward in bold confidence to take what is ours.

Not in earthly attainment and achievement only--but also in spiritual life and culture--does this truth apply. Several of our Lord's miracles illustrate this. For example, when the ten lepers cried to him for mercy, he bade them go and show themselves to the priests. This seemed indeed a strange command to give. The law required that when lepers were actually cured, they were to show themselves to their priest to obtain a certificate of healing. If these lepers had been cured--then their duty would have been to visit the priest. But although there was not as yet a trace of any change in their flesh, the lepers obeyed, setting out at once to find their priests. "And as they went--they were cleansed!" If they had waited to see the cleansing come in their flesh before they would start--they would never have seen it. God was waiting to cleanse them; and the moment their faith began to work, the blessing came.

In precisely the same way, do the blessings of spiritual life come to us. Every invitation of grace carries in it, a promise of mercy and favor. Sinners are invited to come to Christ, and they have the promise of divine life in them when they come. As they take the first steps--the new life begins to flow into their soul. If they waited to get the life before they would obey the call of Christ--they would wait in vain. This would be over-waiting for God. We are invited to follow Christ. As we begin to go after him--the way opens. If we waited for it to open before we would set out after him--it would not open at all. It will open only to the key of faith. We are commanded to take up certain duties. It seems to us that we cannot do them. We say we have no strength. But as we take them up, skill and strength come to us in a mysterious way, and the

duties are easy. We are set to fight certain battles. We say we can never be victorious; that we never can conquer these enemies. But as we enter into the conflict, One comes and fights on our side, and through him we are more than conquerors. But if we had waited, trembling and fearing, for our Helper to come before we would join the battle--we would have waited in vain. This would have been the over-waiting of unbelief.

So it is in all life. We have a duty of waiting for God; but we must beware lest we over-wait, and miss the blessing and the good that God himself is waiting to give us, as our faith claims it.

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