



WAIT!

Pastor Michael Jackson

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In one of the Indiana Jones movies, Indy was in a room that was literally crawling alive with snakes. They were everywhere. They were coming out of the walls, slithering across the floor, falling from the ceiling. They were hissing as their little forked tongues darted in and out of their venomous little mouths. The scene still gives me the creeps. In what has to be one of the most memorable lines in the movie, our fearless star said what? "I hate snakes."

In the same way that Indiana Jones hated snakes, most of us hate to wait. I've read that the average North American spends 5-7 years of his/her life waiting in line.

- We wait for traffic lights to turn green.
- We wait for trains to pass by.
- We wait for the toast to pop up and the water to boil.
- We wait for the movie and the ball game to start.
- We wait for people to arrive and/or leave.
- We wait for buses to come, planes to land and car lines to move.
- We wait for our turn in doctor's offices, dentists offices, barber shops and beauty parlors.
- We wait for payday.
- And we wait for the next weekend, vacation or day off.

Be honest with me. Don't you just hate it when you are in the express line at the grocery store and the person in front of you has eleven items in his or her cart? The sign clearly states, "Ten Items or Less". (Say it back to me, "Ten Items or Less.") How many of you have ever counted the number of items in someone else's cart? Let me see your hands. Aren't you tempted at least a little bit to start counting out loud, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11? Or, have you even been tempted to flip open your cell phone, call 911, and say loud enough so the person in front of you can hear, "Yes, officer, I want to report someone in the express line at Woodman's who has eleven items in his/her cart." I guarantee you one thing, they will never try to move through the express lane again. Can I hear an amen?

Today...

- We demand computers that boot up in seconds,
- E-mail is now favored over so-called snail mail.

We prefer...

- Microwave ovens,
- Instant oatmeal and other so-called fast foods.
- Our Pizza has to be prepared, cooked and delivered to our door within 30 minutes **OR ELSE!**
- Digital photography is rapidly replacing the old fashioned and slower print photography.
- Ten-minute oil changes, and
- Airplanes that travel at nearly the speed of sound.
- Even when we are on vacation we want express check-in and check-out.

The trend seems irreversible.

This impatience even impacts our marriages. We don't seem to have the patience to wait for love and commitment to grow and mature. If our spouse hasn't reached perfection in 5-7 years, then out with the old and in with the new!

This pell-mell pace even carries over to the way people treat sex today. The sexual union between a husband and wife is to be relished. Nurtured. That notion is almost foreign today as people seek instant gratification through pornography, one-night stands, and relationships without commitment. No wonder there is so much preoccupation with sex in our society. People are seeking to make up in

quantity what they have lost in quality. Having excellence in this area of one's marriage takes time and effort. We no longer have the time or the patience to invest either. As a result, we have sex with body but without the soul.

Even death is affected by our impatience. On one hand, when people find they have an incurable disease, they do everything possible to prolong life. Heaven can wait. On the other hand, when they get nearer to death and the quality of life has been drastically reduced, they cannot wait to die. As a result, a number of states are trying to decide whether or not doctors should be used to help hasten one's death.

Religion gets sucked into this no-waiting vortex as preachers promise no-wait results from faith— instant health, wealth and happiness. Churches package their services into no-wait 20, 30, or 60 minute presentations. I call it, McChurch – spiritual fast food. People do not wait for God to speak, wait for maturity, for answered prayer, for the blessings of God, or for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They want it all and they want it **NOW!**

In short...

- we want things to happen, and happen **now**.
- We want to be content and happy in life **now**.
- We want that promotion and we want it **now**.
- We want perfect children and we want them to be perfect **now**.
- We want our marriage to be better and we want it **now**.

We want all sorts of spiritual blessings, and we want them **now!**

The book of Isaiah was written after the reign of King David's son Solomon. As you may remember, at this time Israel was divided into two kingdoms; Israel to the north and Judah to the south. This was a time when God's people were being punished because they had turned their backs on God. A time when they had chosen their own ways and had fashioned their own silly man-made gods. As a result, they had been scattered and carried away into captivity. Many of the men had been murdered, the women raped, and the children sold into slavery. It was a dark time for the Hebrews.

It was at this point that the prophet wrote in Isaiah 40:27-31 (*The New Living Translation*), "**O Israel, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? How can you say God refuses to hear your case? Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up.**" (Verse 31), "**But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.**"

Whenever God's people face difficult times, the natural tendency is to question God. To wonder where He is and why he is not doing anything about the situation. The prophet Isaiah therefore reminded the people of the greatness of the Lord. He also talked to them about waiting. No, not about waiting in line, but waiting on the Lord.

Today I want us to explore three questions from our text. As Isaiah's message helped the people of Israel and Judah so long ago, his message will also help us cope in our times of trial today. Each of the three questions deal with the importance of waiting.

1. WHY DO WE HAVE TO WAIT ON THE LORD?

This, we want it and we want it **NOW** clashes with God's call for us to **WAIT**. We are often like Lucy in an old "Peanuts" comic strip. Lucy was complaining about her lousy life. Charley Brown is trying to cheer her up. "Into each life some rain must fall," he said. That didn't seem to help at all. Then he

thought of another saying: "Just remember, life has its mountains and its valleys, its ups and its downs." To which Lucy replied, "All I want is ups and ups and ups!"

However, life isn't always full of ups and ups and ups. Sometimes we have to face sickness, hardship, disappointment, heartache, and more. We occasionally stumble and fall. It is as we learn to wait that we see the faithfulness of God. It is as we learn to wait that we see our faith grow. It is as we learn to wait that we come to better understand God's ways. As someone once observed, "All good things come to him who waits.

God does not produce instant saints. While salvation is a work of the moment, Christian maturity takes a lifetime to truly develop.

Listen to the emphasis of these verses:

- Psalm 27:14, "**Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.**"
- Psalm 37:7,9, "**Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.**"
- Isaiah 64:4, "**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.**"
- Lamentations 3:24, "**I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.'**"
- Habakkuk 2:3, "**...You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting - it will happen!**"
- Jude 1:21, "**Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.**"

So, why do we have to wait? God tells us too. Just as Israel and Judah had to wait so long ago, so it is that we too have to wait on the Lord today. We wait in patient obedience until God says that the time for Him to act and deliver is right.

Does Isaiah give his readers any reason why they should wait on the Lord? Listen to verses 28-29 of our text again: "**Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.**"

In these verses Isaiah gives ample reasons for waiting on the Lord:

1. He is the **everlasting God**; this means he has no beginning and no end. God's always has been, and God always will be. One of His great names is, The I AM. Who better to wait on than our everlasting God?
2. He is the **creator of the ends of the earth**. He made all things, therefore; He is greater than all things. He controls all things. God knows how everything works and as creator he knows what is best for His creation. Yes, this means that He is someone who is worth waiting on.
3. He is **all powerful**; God is the source of all strength. Isaiah says that even young men get tired and weary. They all have to take a break on the side lines, go to the bench for a few minutes, or rest between rounds. But God does not get tired or weary. Again, that is a reason that we should wait on Him.

That's what the Psalmist had in mind when he wrote Psalm 121:1-4, (*The New Living Translation*), "**I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth! He will not let you stumble and fall; the one who watches over you will not sleep. Indeed, he who watches over Israel never tires and never sleeps.**"

Back now to the question of why. Look with me for a moment at Exodus 3:1-5 (*The New Living Translation*). The passage says, “**One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he went deep into the wilderness near Sinai, the mountain of God. Suddenly, the angel of the Lord appeared to him as a blazing fire in a bush. Moses was amazed because the bush was engulfed in flames, but it didn’t burn up. ‘Amazing!’ Moses said to himself. ‘Why isn’t that bush burning up? I must go over to see this.’ When the Lord saw that he had caught Moses’ attention, God called to him from the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’ ‘Here I am!’ Moses replied. ‘Do not come any closer,’ God told him. ‘Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.’”**”

How long does it take for a bush to burn up? Five minutes, 10, 15? It takes a while, depending on the size of the scrub. Right? Moses was minding his own business when this bush happened to catch his eye. He could easily tell that the bush was on fire. However, the thing that stands out here is, Moses stopped long enough to realize that the bush was not being consumed in the flames. It just continued to burn, and burn, and burn.

What I want you to notice here is, it was when Moses stopped and waited for a while that God spoke to him from out of the bush.

I am of the opinion that one reason he do not hear God any more than we do today, is due to our short attention spans, our impatience, our inability to stop and wait. I believe that God still sets bushes on fire. It is just that we never stand still long enough to notice anything unusual.

Moses had to have stood there for several minutes. When was the last time that you waited before the Lord long enough for Him to speak to you?

Many people today do their praying while they are driving seventy miles an hour down the freeway as they travel to or from work. Even if they saw a burning bush, what could they do about it? “Oh, that looked like a burning bush, I wonder what that was all about? Zoooom!

It is almost as if we all have a case of SADD – Spiritual Attention Deficit Disorder.

Rabbi Kushner wrote, “The burning bush was not a miracle. God wanted to find out whether or not Moses could pay attention to something for more than a few minutes. When he did, God spoke. The trick is to pay attention to what is going on around you long enough to behold the miracle without falling asleep. There is always another world within this one whenever we pay attention.”

Dear friends, stop and look at some bushes. Take a moment, wait, and see if God isn’t trying to communicate to you through your circumstances. Psalm 23:2 says, “**He makes me lie down in green pastures....**” Can I be so bold as to say, I believe that sometimes the only way that God can slow us down enough that we can hear His voice is when He literally makes us lie down maybe even in a sick bed or a hospital room.

Why should we wait on the Lord? One reason is, He tells us too. So we can be reminded of His greatness. Then again, so we can hear His voice.

2. HOW DO WE WAIT ON THE LORD?

We wait in faith. We wait in hope. We wait in anticipation. We know that he can be trusted to deliver what he has promised.

Think back to when you were seven years old. It is ten days before Christmas. The tree is up. Gifts abound. However the biggest “badest” gift under the tree has your name written all over the name tag. You jump up and down in excitement. You want so bad to tear open just a corner of the wrap to see

what is in there. Nine days, eight days, seven days.... You count them down. You wait in eager anticipation.

That is the thought in this verse. We **“wait on the Lord”** with a certain expectancy. We wait in hope. We wait knowing that He hears us and that He is going to respond to our need. We wait in faith.

This expectant waiting is captured in Romans 8:22-23 (*God’s Word* translation), **“We know that all creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time. However, not only creation groans. We... also groan inwardly. We groan AS WE EAGERLY WAIT for our adoption, the freeing of our bodies from sin.”**

We wait, yes, but it is almost as if we are waiting on tip-toe. We are waiting eagerly for that day ...

- when earth shall be set free.
- Earth will be new, clean, perfect once again.
- There will be no more night, no more sea, no more weeds, no more storms, no more cold winters and hot summers.
- Then too, a day is coming and is not all that far off when our bodies that age, grow sick, and die will also be redeemed.
- A day is coming when God’s children shall be revealed for who they (we) are – sons and daughters of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords; the most high Eternal God!
- A day is coming when Planet Earth goes from being paradise lost to paradise regained!

I could say that I am hoping for such a day to come to pass. I could say that I think that bye and bye such a day will come. Or, I could say, I am not sure that such a day will happen. However, none of those sentiments, capture what I really want to say. No, I’m saying that I am waiting with a sure expectancy that this event is going to happen, that I know that it is going to take place.

This is the kind of waiting that the prophet had in mind when he told Israel to wait on the Lord. Wait with a sure expectancy.

Warren Wiersbe in his *Bible Exposition Commentary* writes concerning this: “God’s people are to be redeemed and the evil and corrupt people are to be overthrown and judged. Human history and all matter throughout the universe—all that is corrupt, deteriorating, decaying, and dying—is to be overthrown and consumed. And a new earth and a new heaven are to be created. All the redeemed are to inherit and inhabit the new earth and heavens. This is both the fate and the redemption of the world. This is history written before it happens.”

Until this happens, we wait. However, we wait in faith. We wait with eager expectation of what God is about to do in us His people.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN WE WAIT ON THE LORD?

I am reminded of a sermon that was preached by a black preacher down south. As he was wrapping up the message, he said, “Brethren, this church, it needs to walk.” One of the deacons said, “Amen.” He continued, “Brethren, this church needs to run.” This time the deacon said, “Hallelujah.” Then he said, “Brethren, this church needs to fly.” And the deacon said both “Amen and hallelujah.” Then the minister said, “Well, it’s going to cost money to make this church fly.” To which the deacon replied, “Let her walk, brother, let her walk.”

Our text says; **“But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”** Again, as the people wait on the Lord, they will **“find new strength.”**

Would you like to find some new strength? Listen to how some other translations put this:

- **“Shall renew their strength.”**
- **“Get fresh strength.”**
- **“Shall change *and* renew their strength *and* power.”**
- **“Pass to power.”**

The best word here though seems to be **“renew”**; they shall **“renew their strength.”** The word “renew” means “to exchange,” as taking off old clothes and putting on new ones.

Again, renew means, to change, to pass from one state to another. The passage could actually say, **“They shall exchange strength.”**

And so, what would be the next logical question? Who do we exchange strength with here? I exchange, you exchange, we exchange strength with the Lord.

This is important. This is not talking about building up my strength as with weight-lifting. It is not talking about taking steroids or some other chemical supplement. No, Isaiah is talking about my exchanging my strength with the Lord for His strength.

I like what one preacher brought out here. He pointed out that this actually means an exchange for the better:

- I am exchanging something worse for something superior.
- I am exchanging my weak, finite, limited, exhaustible strength for His strong, infinite, unlimited, inexhaustible strength.
- I am exchanging me for Him.

Now the next logical question is: What will be the results of having my strength exchanged for His strength? The prophet reports that I/we will be able to **“fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”** Some teachers see three stages of Christian growth here:

- (1) the young Christian shall mount up as an eagle;
- (2) the adult Christian shall run; and
- (3) the mature Christian shall walk.

But there is something more to this. The passage is talking about three great impossibilities:

- That of flying.
- That of running and not getting tired.
- And of walking and not becoming weary.

I have Peter Jenkins’s book entitled *Walk Across America*. The brother literally walked all the way from coast to coast. Remarkable. However, please understand, the walk was not non-stop. He had to stop and rest because he got tired and weary from walking. We all do.

So what Isaiah is saying is that you will be able to overcome the natural, the impossible, and live in a way that you could not live before. As A.W. Tozer said, “we have switched from our little human battery to the infinite power of God.”

One more point - God is eager to make this exchange. It is not like going to an exchange/refund counter in a store the day after Christmas and getting some grumpy, discourteous clerk who makes you feel like you should apologize for making them earn their paycheck. No, the Lord is eager to exchange His life for yours.

Our renewal comes from God’s grace and strength. Christ died not only to save you from sins in the past, not only to give you eternal life so you will go to heaven, but to give you His resurrection life

today!

- He gives you His strength for your weakness!
- He gives you His wisdom for your foolishness.
- He gives you His grace for your need.
- He gives you His love for your lostness.
- He gives you His peace for your conflicts.
- He gives His joy for your sorrows.
- He gives you forgiveness for your guilt.
- He gives you His plenty for your poverty.

Leo Green wrote, "This new strength which God gives is graduated to human need.

- There will be strength for soaring, for a life with wings—elevation, vision, buoyancy.
- There will be strength for running, the capacity to meet the stress and strain of trying times.
- There will be strength for walking, for 'the humdrum dullness of ordinary days' with their frustrations and irritations—strength to be steady and saintly in the regular round, to keep on keeping on when the sky is gray and the way is monotonous.

If we wait on the Lord, we shall be perpetually reinforced from within with a strength graduated to our needs"

"No matter how dark the sky, how discouraging the circumstances, how desperate the situation, God is there—a God who is too good to forget and too great to fail. God is there, His mighty arm ruling this universe for Him, redeeming all who will let Him, and reinforcing any who respond to Him in faith and obedience!" (God Reigns, p. 127)

I like the words of this song:

The God on the Mountain
Is still God in the valley
When things go wrong
He'll make them right
The God of the Good Times
Is still God in the Bad Times
The God of the Day
Is still God in the Night.

That's the God that we serve.

Many people today just can't wait. As a result, they resort to quick fixes such as money, drugs, alcohol, fame, success, food, immorality. I am sure that you can add to the list. But, friends, in the long run, those things don't help. They hurt. My advice to you is simple. If you want to soar, then you must first learn to wait. Wait on the Lord. Wait!