

## 11. Waiting in the Crucible

**Biblical material:** 1 Samuel 26; 26:12-25; Ps. 37:1-11; Rom. 5:3-5; 15:4, 5.

### Quotes

- Hoping is disciplined waiting. *E. Hoffmann*
- How much of human life is lost in waiting. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- If you spend your whole life waiting for the storm, you'll never enjoy the sunshine. *Morris West*
- Light thinks it travels faster than anything but it is wrong. No matter how fast light travels, it finds the darkness has always got there first, and is waiting for it. *Terry Pratchett*
- It is strange... that the years teach us patience; that the shorter our time, the greater our capacity for waiting. *Elizabeth Taylor*
- Waiting for the fish to bite or waiting for wind to fly a kite. Or waiting around for Friday night or waiting perhaps for their Uncle Jake or a pot to boil or a better break or a string of pearls or a pair of pants or a wig with curls or another chance. Everyone is just waiting. *Theodore Geisel*
- The universe is full of magical things, patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper. *Eden Phillpotts*
- We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. *E M Forster*

### Questions

How do we share the idea of waiting for God with a “I want it now!” generation? Waiting is usually seen as negative—how do we make waiting positive? In the context of the great controversy, why does the whole of the universe need to wait? When things don't happen when we think they should, how should we react? Is God slow in acting?

### Discussion/ Comment

I hate to wait! (see article). Ours is not a society that likes to wait. We want everything immediately—from fast food to fast cars, everything has to remove the possibility of waiting. Yet we are told to wait on the Lord. Why?

*“Why did Jesus wait for thousands of years until He came to the earth to deal with sin—didn't the universe understand that sin was a very bad thing long before then?” (Monday's lesson).*

What is the waiting, the perseverance, described in Romans 5:3-5? This is no idleness, but rather an active involvement in this world, while we wait for the final fulfillment of God's promises. Usually waiting suggests inactivity, but not for the Christian. As Jesus told his hearers, “Occupy till I come.” Waiting is normally associated with delays and bad planning on somebody's part, but here waiting is God's opportunity to work, particularly for others and for the fulfillment of the plan of salvation. As Peter makes clear, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9 NIV).

Our waiting in the “crucible” is not wasted time. It is time filled with expectation, and action. It is time for our preparation, and more importantly, time to be able to share the truth with

others so that they too may become God's friends. If God is so patient with us, can't we be patient with those around us, encouraging them to discover the joy of a life-long relationship with our trustworthy God?

"Why do the wicked prosper?" is an age-old question. David through inspiration gives some of the answer in Psalm 37. Yet even here we need to recognize that the developing truth of the great controversy is essential—for the evidence of evil must be fully demonstrated, and the answers revealed. Nor should we be looking for vengeance; rather experiencing the sadness of loss as God's rebellious children finally and completely turn away from him.

What has 1 Samuel 26 to do with waiting on the Lord? What lessons can we learn? The story of David's refusal to harm King Saul, even when given every opportunity, reveals an attitude of care even for our enemies. David waits on the Lord to act, and does not force the issue. Think of others in Scripture who were not prepared to wait on God to do as he said, but took matters into their own hands. Even friends like Abraham, acceding to Sarah's proposal to have a child through her servant. Or Rebekah, resorting to duplicity to make sure the prophecy of Jacob ruling Esau would come true. Or Jonah, complaining that he hadn't wanted to come to Nineveh in the first place because he knew that God would be gracious!

Instead of waiting on God, how often do we rush to action, or run away! Waiting may not always be the most comfortable, but in our relationship with God, it's essential. For in the same way God has to wait and give time for truth to be demonstrated, so we too have to patiently wait for the eventual vindication of truth and right.

The time of tension between being ready and occupying till the Lord's return led James White to write in 1868 that "The position of suspense is not the most happy one." Something of an understatement! We too need to live in that "position of suspense" between the "already" and "not yet," recognizing that the time in which we wait is full of potential and possibility, where choices for God and his way can still be made. This should lead us not to inactive waiting, but to the best possible actions, leading others to the God we know and love, before time has gone...

### **Ellen White Comments**

We do not depend on God as we should. Let us leave unsaid every word of complaint. Talk faith and courage while waiting for God. . . . {HP 74}

Many lights are burning dimly, and some are going out. Among those who profess to be waiting for the Lord, many are like the foolish virgins; they have no oil in the vessel with their lamps. When the cry is heard, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," who among us will be found with our lamps trimmed and burning, and go in with him to the marriage feast? {RH, January 19, 1897}

We are in the waiting time; let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, waiting for the Lord when he returneth from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh you may open to him immediately. Watch the first dimming of your light, the first neglect of prayer, the first symptom of spiritual slumber. He that endureth unto the end shall be saved. It is by the constant exercise of faith and love that believers are made to shine as lights in the world. You are making but poor preparation for the Master's coming, if, when he appears, you must present to him talents that you have buried in the earth,--talents neglected, abused, misused, a divided love, serving mammon while professedly serving God. {RH, January 9, 1883}

Watch, pray, work. Watching, working, and waiting for the Lord: this is our proper position. {1NL 93}