



bless them. It speaks of the purpose to exercise grace towards them. But He will not do this immediately. He adopts a waiting policy. "And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you."

I. THE LORD WAITING TO BE GRACIOUS. I shall speak briefly of this principle in God's method of dealing with His people, and then give some illustrations of the principle from the word and from human experience.

God waits. He is never in a hurry. We have to work while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work. But night and day are alike to God. There is no night of rest and idleness with Him. There is nothing of the restlessness and nervousness about God that characterizes men. The world has a bad case of nerves--the world is jittery but God is calm and self-confident.

God waits to be gracious. He waits to bless. Something else must precede God's gracious presence. Grace is predicated upon the fact of sin; sin must abound before grace can much more abound.

II. GOD'S WAITING EXPLAINED. God's waiting is not a waiting of indifference. It is not because He has no concern for the objects of His love. God is not indifferent. He is not cold-hearted towards His chosen people. He means to do something for them. His waiting is not from a cold heart, but from a wise head. Men often wait and hesitate because of indifference to the matter in hand.

God's waiting is not a waiting of perplexity. Men often wait because they do not know what to do; they are perplexed and do not know which way to turn. But God waits because He does know what to do. He knows the need and when to send it. He never sends help too soon; He never withholds help until it is too late.

God's waiting is not a waiting of impatience. How hard it is for men to wait; how impatient we are naturally! Like horses that champ the bits, and cannot stand still, the flesh is restless and impatient. The hardest thing for the soldier in battle is to wait for the command to fire. But God is perfect in patience; His long-suffering is one of the most marvelous of His perfections.

God's waiting is not a waiting of deliberation. Men must deliberate if they act wisely. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Men must take time and seek advice if they act wisely, but God needs neither time nor counsellors in order to know what to do.

God's waiting is not a waiting of idleness. While waiting to be gracious God is busy bringing the schemes of men to naught, dashing their false hopes to the ground. In waiting to be gracious God is busy in the work of convicting us of our own sin and folly.

God waits with a desire and purpose to help the objects of His love. And He knows when to help. There is a wrong time to try to help a drowning man, and there is a wrong time to help in any other trouble. To rescue a drowning man, you must wait until he gives up... wait until he ceases from all efforts to save himself.

The following are some illustrations:

1. Israel in Egypt. God did not mean for His chosen to remain in Egypt forever; redemption was His purpose. But He left them there many years before He delivered them from their oppressors. He waited until they felt the smart from their taskmasters. While waiting to be gracious, God put the fires of persecution behind them and the hope of Canaan before them.

2. Mary and Martha. Sickness came to their home, and they sent for the Master. But He waited. He did not come until Lazarus was dead and buried. He let sickness do its worst. He let the sisters see the futility of all their efforts. He waited for the tears of sorrow to flow freely. Then He came in grace and gave their brother back to them.

3. All the elect under conviction for sin. Under conviction the sinner begins to feel there is no hope for him. He begins to think there is no cure for his sick soul. The gospel, the one and only thing that can give him any real hope, is hid from him. He tries this and that to his utter disappointment until he is about ready to despair and lost all interest. Then the light breaks upon him. The gospel which has been hid all the days past is as clear as the sun. Grace opens his eyes to see Christ as His surety and substitute -- as the One mighty to save.

4. Saints in sorrow. We have our seasons of sorrow, but all our days are not filled with sorrow. The night cometh and also the morning. We put our loved ones in the grave, and turn away to face a future as black as night -- debts to pay, a struggle with strange circumstances and new experiences, new adjustments to make, and a lonely life. But God means to be gracious to His sorrowing people and there will be the morning of hope and joy.

5. God waits to take us to heaven. Heaven is a happier and sweeter place because of the tears, heartaches, and pain we have here on earth. Think of the terrible scenes we pass through on our way to the celestial city! It is through much tribulation we enter the kingdom. In making the pilgrimage from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, Bunyan's Christian had to pass through the Slough of Despond, climb the Hill of Difficulty, fight with Appollyon, pass through the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and spend several days in Doubting Castle and be ill-treated by Giant Despair. When Christian had reached the top of Hill Difficulty he immediately saw two lions that made him afraid. The immortal tinker memorializes this part of Christian's experience in the following lines:

"Difficulty is behind, Fear is before,  
Though he's got on the hill, the lions roar;  
A Christian man is never long at ease,  
When one fright's gone, another doth him seize."

A sight of the cross caused the burden of guilt to roll from Christian's back but it did not make the way easy to the Celestial City.

"Though rough and thorny be the road,  
It leads thee home apace to God;  
Then count thy present trials small,  
For heaven will make amends for all."

—By the late C. D. Cole