

“It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” Lam. 3: 26

You want to know what bugs me? I will admit this bothers me. I get a little perturbed when I go to a restaurant and someone who was seated well after me gets their food first, and I’m still waiting, sipping my water. Now, that kind of waiting is trivial. There are other kinds of waiting that can really break your heart and put your faith to the test. “Waiting quietly” is not something we normally think of as a Biblical virtue. Love, kindness, compassion, and yeah, maybe patience...but “waiting quietly”? Now that’s something (A) we probably don’t think of and (B) aren’t very good at, if we’re being candid.

The way the world is geared, combined with our human nature, doesn’t place much of a premium on “waiting quietly.” We are infinitely more interested in instant gratification; instant messaging; instant results. We prefer fast checkouts; fast food and faster service. And there is no slowdown in sight.

That means something has got to give when we don’t get our way right away. It can become confusing when we bring our hurry-up attitude to our relationship with God. One thing the mature Christian has learned by experience (not to mention the Word of God) is that God’s timing is always perfect—and it usually bears little resemblance to the timing we would prefer. It can be a hard lesson to learn (and re-learn), but the payoff is a peace of mind and heart that money can’t buy—as we grow to trust in the loving character of God.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations, and I’m willing to bet that Lamentations is not at the top of your list of inspirational reading material—after all, it is a book of lamenting—of crying! It’s a sad book. Jeremiah’s country, Judah, had just been destroyed by a foreign nation. His favorite city, Jerusalem, was ruined – just a pile of rocks now, with smoke rising up to the sky. It was truly a “9-11” type of situation for Israel, but worse. Most of the people of Israel were either dead or had been taken prisoner, and Jeremiah was one of those prisoners.

What makes it doubly sad is the fact that God’s people—leaders and normal folks together—had brought it on themselves by ignoring God and doing their own thing. It’s not easy reading, in part because it might mirror a little too accurately the way we live our lives. Yet having said all that, there is something inspiring here; something beautiful. Jeremiah is inspired to write, in the face of all the suffering, loss and grief that you could imagine, the following words: “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in Him.”” “The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” And a few verses later, “For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief,

he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.”

God’s people had been put in a situation where the only thing they could do was wait for the Lord to provide a solution. They had no power whatsoever. All they could do was trust that the Lord would deliver them. It is that thought that gives Jeremiah great hope and courage. Why? Because Jeremiah knows what the Lord is like. He knows the Lord’s personality. He knows that God longs for things to be good between himself and his creation. And because Jeremiah knows the Lord, he trusts that God will do the right thing.

And God did. He used the tragedy of Judah’s destruction to bring the survivors back to him—many of the survivors of Israel would repent of their sin and come back to God. And years later, the survivors returned to Israel, and rebuilt the city, and eventually the Messiah was born right there in Bethlehem, just as God had promised. God never fails. But He works at His own speed. It is rarely the speed that we want him to work at, but it is the perfect speed.

He gives us all the time we need to look in the mirror, to study that reflection, to see where the problem might be me and my sin. We are not to deny that sin or try to cover it up, but just confess it. Own it. Admit it. When you do that, then God can give you what His people waited so long to receive—the blessing of His Messiah. The full pardon and forgiveness created by Jesus’ death on the cross. And did you notice? After Jesus’ death came quiet waiting. His lifeless body was placed in a tomb. For Jesus’ followers, family, and friends, it must’ve been agonizing; heartbreaking; they had no idea that their wait would be broken by the biggest plot twist in history. Think of it. Jesus was buried; entombed. Waiting for Easter sunrise.

It is good to wait quietly for the Lord, because we are waiting on someone who always shows up and always follows through in just the right way and at just the right time. Great is our Lord’s faithfulness to us. Let’s take one silent minute to reflect on that.