The Lord Is Good to Those Who Wait

Psalm 25:1–22

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Opening: On the Hard Work of Waiting

My original plan for today was to look at Psalm 27. I love many things about that psalm. It is a great example of one's personal experience being transformed through the reality of God. In David's case, his experience of feeling forsaken is transformed by the Lord, who becomes his light, his salvation, and his stronghold. My favorite verse is the last one: *"Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"* The psalm ends with the encouragement to wait — but it does not tell us how. And as much as I love Psalm 27, I felt it would be more helpful to hear how to wait well, not just why waiting matters. That conviction led me to Psalm 25, a psalm about waiting well in the Lord.

How well do you wait?

There is one kind of waiting that happens all the time — the kind we experience in traffic, in a doctor's office, or on hold. We don't like it, but we move past it and soon forget about it. That is not the kind of waiting I want to talk about this morning.

The kind of waiting I have in mind is the hard-to-do waiting. It is long-term waiting — the kind that lingers and makes it difficult to sleep. It is the waiting of someone who feels stuck, who is looking for a new job, who has lived with a long-term illness and longs to be healed, or who aches for those future days of graduation, marriage, or family — things the heart longs for that feel so far away. It is also the kind of waiting felt when God does not seem to be moving fast enough, and we are tempted to get ahead of Him.

This is the kind of waiting David is experiencing in Psalm 25. He trusts the Lord, but his troubles remain, his enemies surround him, and he is still waiting for God to act. So what does he do?

Verses 1–3: Trusting God When It Looks Foolish

> *To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.*

Notice what David does before he mentions his problems, before he names his enemies, before he asks God for anything. He begins with God. *I trust you, Lord. I trust you with all of who I am — my desires, my life, my hopes, everything. I depend upon you.* That is what it means when he says, "I lift up my soul to you."

And this trust is deeply personal. David does not say "I trust in God" or "I trust in *a* God." He says, *"O my God, in you I trust."* In the very first verse, we catch a glimpse of his intimate relationship with the Lord. As the Song of Solomon puts it: *"I am my beloved's and he is mine."* That is the voice of someone who knows the Lord, not merely knows about Him.

Now the problem: *let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.* From a worldly perspective, David's trust in God looks misplaced. If God does not show up, his enemies will gloat and call him a fool for believing. We do not know exactly when David wrote this psalm, but it is not hard to find moments in his life that fit it perfectly.

Think of Goliath. When that giant issued his challenge to the army of Israel, young David steps forward and says, in effect, "The Lord will give me victory — I'll fight him." And Saul said, "Go ahead." I can hear David pray this prayer as he hunted for stones in that dry riverbed: *Let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.*

Or think of Ziklag. While David was living there on the run from Saul, the Amalekites raided the town, burned it to the ground, and carried off the wives and children of David and his men. And then David's own men turned on him and spoke of stoning him (1 Samuel 30:6). I can hear this prayer in that moment too.

Or think of Absalom. When David's own son rebels and David must flee Jerusalem, a man named Shimei walks along the ridge above the road, throwing stones and cursing: "Your God has abandoned you, and everyone can see it." Again, I hear David praying: *Lord, let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.*

The Hebrew word translated as "shame" here includes what we normally mean by guilt or embarrassment, but it leans more heavily into the feeling of deep disappointment and disgrace that comes when a particular hope or trust is exposed as having failed.

Here is an illustration that might help. Imagine you are a high school student with a big game tonight. You have told your friends: "My dad is coming to the game, and afterward he's taking us all out for ice cream." The night arrives, the stands fill up, and you keep scanning the crowd. Your dad is nowhere to be seen. And your friends start to tease: "I thought you said your dad would be here." You trusted him. You vouched for him. And now you look foolish in front of everyone. That mixture of disappointment and embarrassment — in front of others — is the shame David is talking about.

He has staked his reputation on God. He has told everyone that God is his light, his salvation, his stronghold. And right now, to everyone watching, it looks as though God has not shown up.

Can you relate? Perhaps you have had the same request on the prayer list for two years. Every time someone asks, “Any news?” you say, “We’re still trusting God” — and you wonder how much longer you can keep saying it. Perhaps it is a son or daughter you raised in the church who now wants nothing to do with God. Or a job, a ministry, a dream you believed God had given you — and it fell apart while everyone watched.

Lord, I trust you. Let me not be put to shame.

So what does David do when he is looking into the stands and God seems absent? He does not collapse, and he does not walk away. Instead, he confesses the truth: *Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.* The phrase “wantonly treacherous” means to betray God for empty things. They shall be ashamed — but not those who wait for God.

Notice that first word in verse 3: *Indeed.* It is the equivalent of saying, “Truly, truly, I tell you: none who wait for you shall be put to shame.” Let that truth sink into your soul.

The theme verse for today comes from the book of Lamentations. Lamentations was written in the aftermath of Jerusalem’s destruction at the hands of the Babylonians — the temple demolished, the people carried into exile, the kingdom of Judah reduced to rubble. Throughout the book, the author — possibly Jeremiah the prophet — voices some of the most searingly honest complaints ever directed toward God. He has abandoned us. He has shown us no mercy. His anger seems unending. He refuses to hear our prayers. If you have ever thought you had reason to be angry or disappointed with God, the book of Lamentations would like a word with you.

And yet, out of that devastation, the author says this:

> *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.*
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> *— Lamentations 3:25–26*

What is happening in your life right now? What destruction has taken place? What heartache are you carrying? What prayers feel unanswered? What situations feel utterly without exit? If that is you, hear the word of the Lord: *The LORD is good to those who wait for him.* And from Psalm 25: *Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame.*

Let that truth sink into your soul.

How Does One Wait Well?

The rest of the psalm answers that question. David shows us not only that we should wait, but how. What does it actually look like to wait for the Lord?

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1. We Wait by Growing in Him and Seeking His Direction (vv. 4–5)

> *Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.*

Notice how David is waiting. Waiting on the Lord is not a time to do nothing, nor a time to do whatever you want until God finally shows up. Rather, waiting for the Lord means using that time to grow in Him and seek His direction.

When David prays, *"Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths,"* he is essentially asking God: "If I am on the wrong path, turn me around." Look at the verbs: *make me to know… teach me… lead me… teach me.* There is a posture of humble openness here. David is using the season of waiting to listen and to seek: *Am I where you want me to be? Am I doing what you want me to be doing?*

And then verse 5: *Lead me in your truth and teach me.* If nothing else happens during this time of waiting, let it be a time when I learn more about you. Help me know you better.

If you are in a season of waiting, don't waste it. Don't become so focused on what you are waiting for God to do that you miss what God wants to do *in you*. Perhaps He is using this very season to teach you something about Himself, to deepen your faith, to correct your path, or to draw you closer to Him. So instead of only asking, "Lord, when are you going to answer my prayer?" begin also asking, "Lord, what do you want to teach me while I wait? What needs to change in me? How can I know you better?" Waiting on the Lord is never wasted time when we use it to grow in Him.

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2. We Wait in Confession (vv. 6–11)

Confession is an acknowledgment of what is true. In these verses, David acknowledges two great truths: who God is, and who David is. He confesses God's goodness, mercy, and faithfulness — and he confesses his own sin and his need for forgiveness.

> *Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!*

There is the prayer: *Lord, remember your mercy; remember not my sins.* And then, here is the truth about God that David confesses:

> *Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.*

And here is David's confession of his own sin:

> *For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.*

Accepting lies — about God or about ourselves — blinds us to what God is doing around us and in us. Some of the lies about God that cloud people's vision are things like: *God doesn't really care about me. God has forgotten me. If He loved me, He wouldn't let this happen. I've sinned too much for Him to forgive me.* A season of waiting is precisely the time to confront those lies and confess the truth: *You are good and upright and faithful in your steadfast love.*

Waiting is also a time to confront the lies we tell ourselves — things like: *It's not my fault. I've done nothing wrong. Everyone else is the problem, not me.* The way to strip away that spiritual blindness is through confession: confessing what is true about God, and confessing what is true about ourselves.

If you are in a season of waiting, use this time to confess what is true. Don't allow your circumstances to define God's character. Remind yourself of what you know: God is good, God is faithful, God is merciful, and His steadfast love never fails. And at the same time, ask God to reveal what is true about you. Is there pride in my heart? Bitterness? Resentment? Something I've refused to acknowledge or am blaming on others? Waiting well means letting God work not only on the circumstances around you, but on the heart within you.

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3. We Wait by Living in Right Relationship with the Lord (vv. 12–15)

> *Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land. The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net.*

The phrase "the fear of the LORD" is often misunderstood. We hear the word "fear" and think of being scared. But in Scripture, the fear of the Lord is about deep reverence, awe, and respect — the kind that leads naturally to trust and obedience. It means living in right relationship with God: knowing who He is, knowing who we are, and living accordingly.

An analogy I find helpful is electricity. Electricity is incredibly powerful, and it is also genuinely dangerous. The same current that lights your home and powers your appliances can electrocute you or burn your house down. That is why we have electrical codes, circuit breakers, and safety covers on outlets. Electricity is a tremendous blessing when you respect its power; if you don't, you die. The same is true of the Lord. He is all-powerful. He is holy. He is sovereign. He is the author of life and death. Living in right relationship with Him is not optional — it is the foundation of wisdom.

Now please notice verse 14: *"The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him."* Think about that. The God who created the heavens and the earth, who holds all things together, who is holy beyond our comprehension — He invites us into close fellowship with Himself. The fear of the Lord does not drive us away from God. It draws us into friendship with Him.

So often what we want most from God is an answer. *Lord, tell me what you are doing. Tell me why this is happening. Tell me when things are going to change.* But sometimes what we need more than an answer is to enjoy God in friendship. He invites us to know Him.

If you are in a season of waiting, don't let frustration or impatience pull you away from the Lord. Remember who He is. He sees what you cannot see, and He knows what you do not know. Keep your eyes on Him. That is exactly what David says in verse 15: *"My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net."* Notice — David's feet are still in the net. His circumstances have not changed. But his eyes are on the Lord. He does not know when God will deliver him, or how. But he knows where to look.

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4. We Wait in Prayer (vv. 16–22)

> *Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins. Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me. Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*

What strikes me most about this prayer is what David asks God to consider. *Consider my affliction and my trouble. Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me.*

David is not coming before God with his résumé. He is not cataloguing his accomplishments, his sacrifices, his years of faithful service. He does not say, "Lord, look at everything I have done for You. Surely I deserve an answer by now."

No. The only thing David brings before God is his need. *I am lonely. I am hurting. I am overwhelmed. I am surrounded by enemies. I need Your help. I need Your grace.*

And that is enough. It calls to mind the line often attributed to Jonathan Edwards: "You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary."

That is the wonderful thing about coming before the Lord. We don't come because we have earned His attention. We don't come because we have been good enough or faithful enough or because we have something to offer. We come because we need Him. And the wonderful truth of Scripture is that God does not turn away those who come to Him in their need.

Look again at verse 16: *"Turn to me and be gracious to me."* How is David approaching the Lord? By grace. *Lord, I don't deserve your help, but I need it. I cannot solve this on my own. I am bringing you everything that is broken, everything that hurts, everything I cannot fix.*

If you are in a season of waiting, don't let your need drive you to discouragement. Let your need drive you to prayer. You don't have to have the right words or everything figured out. All you need is need. Bring your troubles, your loneliness, your disappointments, and your fears to the Lord who is faithful, full of mercy, and abounding in steadfast love.

Conclusion: He Is Worthy of Your Trust

The psalm began with David saying, *"To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust."* In verse 3, he declares, "I am waiting." And now, in verse 21, near the end of the psalm, he is still waiting: *"for I wait for you."*

Between those two moments, he has shown us what waiting well looks like. He has been seeking God's direction, confessing the truth about God and about himself, living in right relationship with the Lord, and bringing his needs before God in prayer. He is waiting well.

How are you waiting?

I cannot tell you how long your season of waiting will last. I cannot promise that God will answer your prayers in exactly the way you hope. But I can remind you of what David knew to be true about the Lord: He is good. He is faithful. He is merciful. His steadfast love endures. He is worthy of your trust, and your trust in Him is never misplaced.

The LORD is good to those who wait for him.

A Word About the Gospel

Before I close, I want to speak directly about the gospel in light of Psalm 25.

At the very beginning of this psalm, David said, *"O my God, in you I trust."* Notice how personal that is. David is not simply affirming that God exists, or that he has correct information about God. He is saying: *You are my God. I know you. I trust you. My life is in your hands.*

Is that true of you?

Perhaps you know a great deal about God, but you don't truly know Him. If that describes you, I want to invite you into something: the friendship with the Lord described in verse 14. And the way into that friendship is through the Righteous One, Jesus Christ. Jesus came, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again so that we might be forgiven, reconciled to God, and given eternal life. And the wonderful news of the gospel is that you do not have to earn that forgiveness. You come to Him by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. David prays in verse 11, *"For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great."* That prayer finds its answer in Christ.

If you have never placed your trust in Jesus Christ, I invite you to do so today.

Don't simply wait for your circumstances to change. Come to the One who can change your life — so that you, too, can say with David: *"O my God, in you I trust."*