

All Along The Watchtower

Testing Positive: Finding Faith in Crisis: Pt.2

We are looking at this little book in the Old Testament, Habakkuk. And we're doing it because it's a book about how to handle and face times of crisis. Now, you know, when a society has a long run - many years or decades - of good times, things getting better and better, people begin to think that's normal. That's how history *should* be going. They should always find that things get better and better over time. "Our children will do better than we did, my house will always appreciate in value." That kind of thing.

J.R.R. Tolkien in his description of Hobbits and their idyllic home in the Shire, wrote that things were so calm there that "they came to think that peace and plenty were the rule in Middle-earth and the right of all sensible folk." I can tell you that isn't just a tendency of the Hobbits. It's easy to get lulled into the view that peace and prosperity are the rule in the world and the right of all decent and sensible folk.

But the Bible - the book of Habakkuk, the book of Job, many other places - says that's just not true. And of course, history shows it's not true. The *first* half of the twentieth century was a terrible time - global wars, genocide, economic depression. Very troubled times that came on for decades in which things did *not* get

better and better. Things did not improve. Everybody wondered how we were going to make it through.

Now we've started this new century - and millennium - with terrorism at home, war abroad - not just the Middle East, but there's potential conflict in Asia and with Russia - mass shootings seem to be through the roof, racial tension, we'd only just recovered from the worst economic recession since the 1930's crash - and a lot of people got left out of that recovery by the way - we may not remember that in Austin. And now we have to wear masks when we venture out to HEB, like we're living in Mad Max. I used to say that in the apocalypse people would be in the streets fighting over gasoline. Another failed prediction. They can't *give* that stuff away. I'll gladly trade you a barrel of oil for a 12 pack of Charmin Ultra!

There are a lot of stress inducing events in our world today. But really the focus of the Bible is, it's not the times themselves that matter, it's how God's people *respond* to the times, up or down. That if you come to grips with parts of the Bible like Habakkuk, the book of Job, places in the Psalms, you're prepared. Because the Bible, in these places, says, "No, don't expect, don't count on, good times. That's *not* really the norm, but even in disaster and evil, God is working and there are ways for you to face it." And that's what we're looking at for just a few weeks in the book of Habakkuk.

Now in week one, we started with chapter 1. And in chapter 1, Habakkuk – this prophet that we really don't know much about - starts with a great complaint. He is complaining to God, saying, "Look at all this evil and suffering you're allowing to happen in my nation. Why would you allow that? Why don't you do something?"

And God's first response is, "Oh, I'm going to do something. It's going to get even *worse*. I'm going to bring the Babylonians. They're going to invade your country. It's going to get even worse." And Habakkuk responds and says, "You call that an answer? I'm even *more* upset now." That's chapter one.

And then he waits to hear God's second answer. He prayed. God has a first answer. He prays again. Then God will have a second answer. And that's where we pick it up today in **Habakkuk 2:1–4**, I want to read this little interlude for you and then we'll break out some important lessons from it. *"I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. 2 Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. 3 For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for*

it; it will certainly come and will not delay. 4 See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous will live by his faith..."

Now in that little section, we have a number of metaphors that tell us a lot about one of the main ways in which we're able to handle times of crisis. It's what the Bible calls "waiting on the Lord." This is a *major* theme in the Bible, and it's a major theme here. Now, it's almost a cliché; people say, "I'm just waiting on the Lord. You just need to wait on the Lord." And *nobody* knows what that means. It *sounds* spiritual, but what does it mean?

But I want you to know that there *is* a meaning to it and the Bible, in many places, tells us what it means, and maybe no better place than here, because there are at least five aspects or five ways to wait on the Lord that we see in this text. If you want to take some notes...are you still doing that from home? You know it's kind of easier, because if I go too fast on a point, you can just pause me. I know my wife would love that feature in real life! But five points today; we are going to discover that to wait on the Lord means to wait **patiently, perspectively, obediently, piously, and joyfully**. Let's look at each of these.

First, we're supposed to wait on God **patiently**; you notice how down in **v.3** God says, "*For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. **Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.***" See, Habakkuk is confused, he's upset, he's looking for answers and God says, "I'm going to give you some answers. I'm going to send you revelation, but it might linger. It may take time. And when it lingers...*wait* for it."

Now this word for "wait" is the basic Hebrew word that means, "Be patient." You know, if you're waiting in line to get into Costco – have you experienced that joy yet? How about in 95 degree heat wearing a mask? If you say "forget this" and decide to go hunt down some squirrel instead of buying 20lbs of crab ravioli, you've given up. You're not waiting for it anymore. Wait for it. Wait means be *patient*. Wait means *don't* give up. *Don't* despair.

And so the first thing - maybe the most basic thing - waiting on the Lord means is when everything makes no sense, when you're confused, you're perplexed, you don't know what's going on in your life, you're in the midst of difficulties, instead of *giving* up, *blowing* up...you're patient. Be patient. That's what waiting on the Lord means. Be patient *in* your troubles, *in* your circumstances.

Now, a lot of people say, "Oh, I *wish* I could...I wish I had patience...I'm just not a patient person." As if patience is like a trait you're just born with. Trust me, it's not. It's something that has to be developed, and I think biblically it gets developed when we pursue two deliberate mindsets – and they can seem contradictory, but they're not. Patience comes the more we seek **humility and confidence.** They seem contradictory, but this is what the gospel produces in us when we fully understand it – humbles us to the ground and lifts us to the heavens, *at the same time.*

And I can show you both of these from the New Testament book of James. Let's look at **humility** first - patience comes as a deliberate act of humility. For example, in **James 4:13-15**, we read this, - and this has become my life verse these last two months - "*Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "**If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.**"*"

This says we have our plans, what we're going to do in the future, but really we should hold our plans loosely, because we really *don't* know what the future holds. Now, you *thought* you believed that before...you believe it now don't you? How many of you have vacation plans for this summer and you're like, "Well, who knows, we'll just have to wait and see...if it's the Lord's will..." A pastor texted me on Wednesday, "When you guys going back to services in your building?" I said, "Why don't you ask me the winning PowerBall number while we're at it!" We don't want to be left in the dark – that makes us feel dependent - we want to *know* what's going happen.

Knowing the future is called “omniscience” – which is one of the three traits that makes God, God. God is omniscient, we are not. Ok, so apply this to patience. Why do we get anxious and angry? Why do we worry and despair? It's because of an assumed omniscience. When you are falling apart because X, Y, Z is not happening – “my life will be a disaster if X, Y, Z doesn't happen!” Well, how do you know that? You *don't* know that. God knows what the consequences of X, Y and Z will be, but *you* don't. So you're taking on a responsibility that you're not equipped for and that makes you freak out. Lay down the burden of omniscience. It's such a relief. Humble yourself with the knowledge that God is in control no matter what happens.

So patience comes from humility, but it also comes from **confidence**. Let me explain that like this. Deanna and I have been continuing to do our Camp Gladiator workouts during this – just instead of the church parking lot at 5am, we do them from home in our living room with the instructor screen-mirrored up on the television. So at least I don't have to go through the hassle of *driving* somewhere to be tortured. I can experience that torment in my own home.

Now, we've actually been more faithful to it during this – I mean there's very few excuses now. But before I would sometimes miss a week because of travel of something. And coming back was just a nightmare, right? Everything hurts all over again. But when we are doing it consistently, it actually starts to feel pretty good. I had an 8 hour Zoom meeting on Tuesday and I couldn't *wait* to go home and do a workout. The energy level is up, my heart is pumping and when it's over, I may be tired, but I have confidence – “I am strong like bull!” And the more frequently I subject myself to the pain of the workout, the more confidence I get.

Ok, well the Bible says that when you face times of crisis in your life, that's turning you into something good. See those workouts are painful at first – expose your weakness, leave you sucking wind - but on the backend they make you stronger. So for example, **James 1:2-4**, “*Consider it **pure joy**, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face **trials** of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces **perseverance**.*” - Which is just another word for patience - “*Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be **mature and complete**, not lacking anything.*”

Or **Romans 5:3-4**, “*Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that **suffering produces perseverance**; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*” You know the dulcet tones of Neil Diamond? Well did you know what his name was before he got into show business? He was originally Neil Coal – but then the pressure got to him. See, we know that pressure can break a rock into dust or it can turn a lump of coal into a diamond. Times of crisis can make you bitter or make you better. Which of those two depends on your faith. Do you believe that God wants to turn you into dust or a diamond? Do you believe God wants to make you a better person or a bitter person?

If you have the right view of God, bad circumstances will give you a certain confidence. “Boy, the enemy is throwing every thing he has at me...God must really be about to do something.” That is a deliberate attitude of faith over fear. That builds patience. And patience builds maturity and stability.

You know, maybe the key verse in the book of Job, **Job 23:10** says, “*But [God] knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.*” Job is saying, “God knows what he is doing with me,” which is another way of saying, “I don't.” That's humility. But at the same time Job says that when this test is over – when this time of crisis ends – I will be golden. I will have the prize. That's confidence. God wants to produce *both* those traits in His children. Isn't that what you want in your kids? You want braggarts? No. You want doormats? No. You want a quiet confidence. You want a humble strength.

That's what God wants in you. And therefore, waiting on the Lord means, first up, not giving up, not freaking out, being patient under your circumstances because you have a humble confidence in what God is doing in your life. That's the first thing, wait on the Lord patiently. Secondly, we are to wait on the Lord **Perspectively**.

Now you say, “What does that mean? Is that even a real word” Yes it is. And I’m looking at the image Habakkuk uses in **v.1** when he says, “*I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts ...*” He’s waiting for God and he’s doing it, he says, “up on the ramparts.” I don’t know why the New International Version used “ramparts”, which is a little bit vague. It’s a word that literally means a “tower” – like a watchtower. All along the watchtower.

Now why did ancient cities build towers? They built towers so that you could see what was coming. See, down on the ground, there are all sorts of things you can’t see. But in the tower...and the higher the tower, the more you can see what’s coming. You can see *weather* coming that you can’t see on the ground so the city can be ready for it. You can see *enemies* coming that, on the ground, you couldn’t see ‘till it’s too late. You can see *allies* coming.

You can see what’s coming! You know, for example, if there was an enemy at your city gate with 100 horsemen you’d say, “Oh my! What are we going to do?” But if you’re up in the tower, and you see the dirt of a 1000 allied horses riding your way just behind them, you say, “Phew! Hold tight, everything’s gong to be fine.” You got perspective on it. It’s going to be all right.

Now what does it mean when Habakkuk says, “I’m waiting on the Lord by going into the tower”? He’s not literally in a tower, what does that mean *spiritually* speaking? It means that you must not simply look at your problem, but you have to put it in the bigger *perspective* of everything the Bible tells you. Let me give you an example of going into the tower. Paul says in **Romans 8:18 (KJV)** “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” I like that word “reckon”. The NIV has “consider”, but that’s not nearly as cool as “reckon”. It’s like a salty old cowboy, “Well, I reckon we best clear outta this here pass fore darkness settles upon us.”

That word “reckon” is the word *logizomai*, which means, “I add it up. I calculate it. I think it out. I work it out in detail.” It’s an accounting word. He says, “I reckon my sufferings aren’t worth worrying over.” Now Paul had a lot of suffering. A *lot* of things went wrong for him. He had physical problems with his eyes. He was persecuted. All kinds of problems. But he says, “I put it in perspective. My sufferings look really big *until* I compare them to the glory that will be revealed.” He is going into the tower. He is looking at the big picture. And suddenly his sufferings look small.

Now listen, this is very practical. Paul is sick, but get into the tower. How do you do that? You say, “Well, wait a minute. The only sickness that can *really* kill me, which is sin, is gone. It’s done. It’s been paid for. And the glorious body that awaits me at the consummation of history is greater than any health I could have now.” Or if you have financial troubles you can say, “I’m in debt, but the only debt that can *really* sink me forever and ever is sin, and that has been paid for. And there is a *true* riches at the end of time that I will have waiting for me, and even the greatest wealth I could possibly amass here on the earth is *nothing* compared to that.”

What’s Paul doing? He is meditating on the glory that is coming until it *penetrates* him and he looks at his suffering and he can handle it. Do you see that? Do you *do* that? Do you know *how* to do that? Waiting on God, waiting on the Lord, is not a passive thing. Waiting on the Lord means thinking like that, going into the tower, *logizomai*. “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” I think and think and think about the glory of God until my sufferings become something I can handle. That’s perspective. But that’s not all.

Thirdly, waiting on the Lord doesn’t just mean getting the proper perspective and being patient; it also means being obedient. We’re supposed to wait on him **Obediently**. And this comes back to what we saw in

week 1 – Habakkuk said some very, very direct things to God about his disappointments, but it never occurred to him to walk away from God. Some of you have military experience and you certainly know this, but even if you’re not in the military, you know from just common sense, you don’t get to leave before your shift is over. You don’t get to leave your post until your watch is done.

If you are a sentry on duty, if you’re on guard duty, it doesn’t matter whether you don’t feel so good – “Do I feel warm to you?” It doesn’t matter whether you’re sleepy. It doesn’t matter whether you’re bored. It doesn’t matter your circumstances at all. You may not leave your post. You *can’t*. The whole city could be lost. You can’t say, “Well, you know, I’ve been up here day after day. There have never been any enemies. I’m going to knock off early.” You watch movies, that’s *exactly* when the enemy shows up, right?

It doesn’t matter. You *cannot* leave your post. You *must* do your duty. And this is Habakkuk’s way of showing us that even though he is struggling with God - we saw that last week, and we will later too - he is struggling enormously with God. He is emotionally and intellectually very realistic. He doesn’t get it. He is asking God some really hard questions...but he will not leave his post.

And what that means is really simple. You may be weary. You may feel God is absent. You may be getting absolutely nothing out of your Christian walk at all. You may be incredibly confused about what's going on. You may be experiencing disappointment after disappointment after disappointment. You may be getting none of your prayers answered. But you can't leave your post. You have to obey Him.

Do you know why? Because the word "waiting", even in English, doesn't mean "waiting around." Why do they call them "waiters" and "waitresses"? They're certainly not waiting around. They're *running* around. Why? Because to wait means to serve. 'Ladies in waiting' or "servants in waiting" are not waiting around. They're serving. And one of the things waiting on the Lord means is, even when you don't feel like it, you still do your duty. Because it's ultimately not about you, it's about Him.

But most of us don't get that – not in this "me centric" society we've been raised in. So what very often happens when God seems absent – times of crisis, disappointments, difficulties – we *stop* doing the things that we know that God expects us to do. We stop coming to worship. We stop private prayer. We stop reading our Bible. We stop going to our small group. We stop serving people. Why? Because we're filled with self-pity. We feel bad, and we're not getting anything out of it, right?

At the court-martial for the guard who just left his post and the base was overrun by the enemy, the judge says, "What do you have to say for yourself?" He says, "You know, I just wasn't feeling it bro. So I left." The judge says, "Oh, well then, case dismissed." No! Not at all. So *what* if you're getting nothing out of it? Someone wrote the great pastor John Newton - he is also the great hymn writer, wrote "Amazing Grace" - and said, "I'm just getting nothing out of praying." And Newton replies, "I can tell you you're going to get nothing out of *not* praying."

I mean, in times where you're weary, you're disappointed, you're empty, you don't know why God is not answering your prayers, it's very easy - you just want to feel good - so you do things with sex. You do things with money. You do things with food or alcohol. You do things to make yourself feel good. You do something you *know* isn't right, and you feel relief for a minute. But then afterwards, you feel even worse.

That's leaving your post! Waiting on the Lord means no matter how troubling things are, you don't leave your post. You just do what you're supposed to do. Put one foot in front of the next. Let me give you a great example of this from the world of literature – and I wind up using a lot of masculine illustrations because...I don't know, because I'm a *man* I suppose – but let me dig into some great feminist literary tradition this morning. How many of you have read the great novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte? My mother recently told me that this is her favorite novel.

The title character is a woman who was an orphan. She is plain. Nobody likes her. She grows up, and nobody really cares for her. She is just so lonely. She wants so much to be loved. Then she meets this handsome man, Mr. Rochester. And he loves her, and she loves him. And they are all set to wed when suddenly she finds out he is already married. Oh, I guess I should have said, “Spoiler Alert” – look, it didn’t just drop on Netflix, this was written in 1847! He has a mentally ill wife locked away up in his attic. Ladies, that is a red flag! So legally, if not functionally, he’s still married. And he says, “Look, just run away with me and we’ll live in the South of France and no one will ever know.”

But Jane is a woman of moral principles and she’s like, “Marriage is a sacred contract until death do us part. I don’t want to be some mistress.” But at that point, what she knows in her *head* is the right thing to do and what she wants to do in her *heart* are two *absolutely*, diametrically opposed things. And the dialogue that goes on between her and Mr. Rochester and between the different parts of her own heart is just remarkable. This is a great example of waiting on the Lord and not leaving your post. This is her voice...(p.319-321)

She said, “Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshiped: and I must renounce love and idol.” Interesting. “I did.” This is a paraphrase, but Mr. Rochester said

with a wild look crossing his features, “What do you mean, Jane? What shall I do? Where shall I turn for a companion and for some hope?” Jane said, “Do as I do: trust in God. Believe in heaven. And hope to meet again there.” “Then you will not yield?” “No.” “Then you condemn me to live wretched and to die accursed?” “I advise you to live sinless, and I wish you to die tranquil.”

Later in the conversation, Mr. Rochester said, “Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law, no man being injured by the breach? For you have neither relatives nor acquaintances whom you need fear to offend by living with me?”

Then she concludes like this: “This was true: and while he spoke my very conscience and reason turned traitors against me, and charged me with crime in resisting him. They spoke almost as loud as Feeling: and that clamored wildly. ‘Oh, comply!’ it said. [...] ‘Tell him you love him and will be his. Who in the world cares for you? Or who will be injured by what you do?’ Still indomitable was the reply— ‘I care for myself. [...] I will keep the law given by God ...I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigor...If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth?...Foregone determinations are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot.’ I did.”

She didn’t leave her post. See? “I will stand at my watch”. So, “waiting on the Lord” means waiting *patiently*, means waiting *perspectively*, means waiting *obediently*, and fourth, it means waiting **Piously**. Now let me define this for us, “pious” comes from a Latin word that means “pure devotion” rather than fraudulent motives. It means that when you are waiting on the Lord...you’re not waiting on the Lord’s *answer*, you’re not waiting on the Lord’s *reward*, you’re not waiting on the Lord’s *things*...what you’re really waiting on is the *Lord*.

Let me explain this. Habakkuk has often been called a “little book of Job.” It’s a mini-book of Job. And by the way, it’s a heck of a lot easier to read than the book of Job! Built in the book of Job, it starts with Satan coming to God and saying, “Does Job serve God for nothing?” Satan says to God, “Job *looks* like he is your servant, but he is not your servant. He looks like he is waiting on you, but he is actually waiting for your *things*. He looks like he loves you for you yourself, but he actually only loves you for the things he is getting.”

Satan says, “I mean look at all the things you have given him. Look at his great family. Look at his money. Look at his fame and success. If you let me take all that away, I bet you Job will abandon you. Take it all away and then you’ll see he was not loving you for yourself. He was only loving you for the things he was getting. He wasn’t waiting *on* you. He was waiting on things *from* you. And he will curse your name.”

Now, Satan is wrong about Job, but he’s basically right about us, you know. Basically when you get started with God, you start to approach God, you first connect to God, you’re doing it to get something. You’re doing it because you’re unhappy. You’re doing it because you’re guilty or looking for forgiveness. You’re looking for things. That’s okay, but it had better not stay there. And here’s why; it’s hypocrisy.

Lets say your dad owns a pizza parlor. And you ask a girl out for a date and she says “Sure, hey why don’t we go out for pizza?” And every time you date her, you guys go to the free pizza place. And this goes on for several months and then one day you say to her, “Hey, my dad sold the pizza place. I guess we’ll have to start going out for Chinese, ha-ha.” And you never see her again. She drops you like a stone. Ignores your calls, blocks your Tweets, ghosts you.

How would you feel? Would you feel betrayed? Would you feel objectified? Would you feel dehumanized? Yes! Because you say, “She never loved me for *me*, she just loved me for the *pizza!*” How awful! And yet for years as a pastor I’ve talked to people who have said, “Oh, I used to go to church. I prayed for things, and God never really came through for me, so I’m out of there.” And they’re treating God exactly the way they would never, *ever* let anybody else treat them.

They’re treating God in a way that if somebody treats them in the same way, they’re *furios!* And you have a right to be furious. What does it mean to wait on the Lord? It means to love Him for who He is in Himself. And that means to be faithful to Him even when you’re getting *nothing* out of it at all. And it’s *only in times of crisis that you have an opportunity to turn your self-interested, exploitative relationship with God into real love.*

It's only when loving Him gives you no benefit at all. Do you know what? If you look at Job, if you look at the end of Habakkuk, it's a wonderful ending to the book - we'll get there. If you look at the psalmists, the people who are wrestling – and they *are* wrestling - they're angry, and they're struggling. They're asking God hard questions. But in the end, they stay with God.

Do you know why? Because they've become *servants*. They've become people who love Him for who He is. They're serving Him just because He is God. They're loving Him just for who He is in Himself. It's possible to get there...but almost only ever through tough times. And therefore, whenever darkness descends on you, whenever bad things happen to you and you get disappointed and you're really upset with how everything is going in your life, God is asking you a question.

And that question is basically this: “Now we'll find out whether you got into this relationship with me to serve me or to get me to serve you. Now we'll know.” And if you stick with Him and if you learn how to love Him no matter what, if you learn to be faithful to Him even though you're getting nothing out of it at all, when the darkness lifts, you will find the pressure has turned your heart, that lump of coal, into a diamond.

And there will be a calm in the midst of crisis. There will be a fortitude. There will be a poise. There will be a peace you didn't have before. That's what happens when you come to realize, “I'm in this with God forever. I don't need to get anything out of it. I'm with Him because He is God, not because He is doing this or that for me.”

So waiting on the Lord means waiting on Him *patiently, perspectivevely, obediently* and *piously*...but last of all it's waiting on Him **Joyfully**. The last verse is one of the most important verses in the Bible. And it was picked up by Paul in Romans and in Galatians. It was picked up by the writer to the Hebrews in chapter 10. And it says, (v.4) “...*the righteous will live by his faith*...” God is saying to Habakkuk, “Be patient. Wait on me. Be unconditionally obedient,” but how? Not just stoically, because faith in this situation – and Paul is right, and the Hebrews writer is right - faith is not just *stoically* holding on to God.

It is - instead of looking at the circumstances around us - relying on your faith in the redemptive purposes of God that come through the gospel. In other words, instead of looking at your circumstances and being affected by them, be affected by what God has done for you to save you in Jesus Christ. That's actually what it means. And that's the reason why I would say you don't necessarily *have* to have joy as you're waiting for the Lord, but it sure does make life easier. And here's how you can have it. In fact, here's the *only* way you can have it.

You have to look at one of the most amazing passages to me in the Bible. It's one little verse. Jesus Christ in Luke 12, is telling a parable about a master who goes away on a trip and he leaves his servants behind. Some of the servants are obedient and faithful because they're sure he is coming back. Others are disobedient and unfaithful because they don't think he is coming back.

And it's Jesus' way of saying, "I want my followers to *wait* for me. I want them to live patiently. I want them to live obediently because they're waiting for me." Okay? But then in **Luke 12:37**, Jesus completes the parable like this, he says, and I'm going to read the KJV again, "*Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find **watching**: verily I say unto you, that **he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.***"

Now, whenever Jesus says, "Verily, verily" (or "I tell you the truth" is how the NIV translates it), it's a solemn statement. "Amen, amen!" We did a series a while ago called "*The Amens of Jesus*" looking at these passages. But this is code that he is about to say something very important. And I'll tell you, this is powerful.

Here's what he is saying. He is saying, "At the end of time, I'm going to have all of my people sit down at the table. And I'm going to gird myself to *wait* on them."

Now the word "gird" is a metaphor that comes from back in those days – we talked about it during the *Armor of God* series – "gird your loins with the belt of truth." If you were going to do some intense action, you had to pick up your flowing robe and put it into your belt so you could focus, so you could bare your legs, so you could run, or you could do something intense without getting tripped up. It was a metaphor that meant to focus *all* of your powers on *one* goal.

Do you know who is talking here? Jesus Christ is saying, "I'm going to focus *all* of my powers on infusing *all* the joy, *all* the honor, *all* the fulfillment and happiness that I possibly can on *you*." Now, wait a minute, that's crazy. This is God - not only all knowing, but all powerful, omniscient *and* omnipotent – and He is saying, "I'm going to focus all of my omnipotent powers on making you as happy as you possibly can be, on bringing you absolute, incredible, cosmic, infinite joy. That's what I'm going to do. If you wait for me, if you wait *on* me your whole life, I will literally wait on you for all eternity. I will gird myself, and I will serve you."

You say, “Wow. That’s almost too much. I mean, how can we even believe such a thing?” I’ll tell you how. I can guarantee that this is going to happen. Do you know why? Because the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. And we know that Jesus Christ is going to serve us in the **future** because he **did it in the past**. Because on the night before he died, he girded up his loins, and he washed the feet of his disciples. They were so shocked. “What a lowly thing to do, to wait on us like a servant, like a table waiter! Why are you doing that?”

Do you know what Jesus was doing? What he was saying is, “I’m going to the cross. I’m going to die. I’m going to wait on you by going to the cross and dying for your sins.” Do you want to see patience, Jesus Christ being patient with the very wrath of God and not giving up? He was waiting on us. He was serving us. He was loving us. And he did not abandon his post.

There’s the ultimate example of patience. And here’s what I want to ask you. If you see Jesus Christ, the Lord of the universe, willing to lay aside all of his celestial being and joy and come down and wait on you by going to the cross. And not giving up - even in the garden of Gethsemane, even on the cross, even under the wrath of God - why can’t you wait for him now? Why can’t you wait on him now?

See, if you see him waiting on you in the *past* and waiting on you in the *future*, you’ll be able to wait on him *now*. And you’ll be able to do all of this with joy. And if you wait on him patiently, perspective, obediently, piously, joyously, unconditionally, fully, you will find the serving is really perfect freedom. And no matter the crisis around you, you will walk in the peace of faith.

Let’s pray...