



Perfect Timing

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. PSALM 40:1

JANUARY 10

Psalm 40:1

Simply wait upon Him. So doing, we shall be directed, supplied, protected, corrected, and rewarded.

—Vance Havner

IN WORD Patience is one of the hardest virtues for us to understand. We pray to an omnipotent God. We know He is able to help us at any moment. We know that He who defines Himself as “love” and gave His Son for us is not reluctant to help us. So when we ask such a God to intervene in our circumstances, why is there so often a delay?

Nowhere in the Bible does God promise us instant answers to our prayers. His promises for answered prayer are amazing and reassuring, but none of them includes a timetable. He only assures us that He is never too late. Yet in our impatience, we don’t want an answer that is simply “not too late.” We want an answer now. We have needs, and we do not understand why those needs must be prolonged.

But God has His reasons. Perhaps our needs are being prolonged because they are accomplishing something in us that nothing else will. Perhaps they are being prolonged because God is doing a necessary work in the life of someone else who is involved in our situation. Perhaps He is teaching us about prayer or perfecting our faith. Maybe He is even letting us identify with Jesus in the fellowship of His sufferings—it is, after all, His overarching purpose to conform us to the image of Christ. How can we be conformed if we have no identification with His pain?

IN DEED Sometimes God will make clear that our answer is delayed because the delay will further His work in our own hearts or in another area. Sometimes He gives us no reason at all. The Christian’s wise response, in either case, is to know that if we are waiting on God, there must be a very good reason. And if we wait in faith and expectancy, the wait will be amply rewarded. His timing is always perfect.

The Renewed Mind

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. ROMANS 12:2



IN WORD How will we see things when God's wisdom has become a part of our own thinking? What should this renewed, transformed mind of the believer look like? There are three radical reorientations that we must undergo. We will begin to understand our time, our treasures, and our talents differently. We will stand in a dramatically different place than we once stood, and our perspective will reflect the change. Our eyes will gaze on new heights and our desires will lean in new directions. We are a new creation; we will learn to live as one.

How do we get there? Do we change suddenly or little by little? Is it by the diligence of our effort or by the merciful gift of God? Is it a matter of hard study or spiritual osmosis? The answer is "all of the above." God will give us His mind—we can be sure of that. It comes from Him out of the mercies of His good will, and He is generous with all of His children. But it also requires a diligence that will search His Word, seek His guidance, cooperate with His plan, receive His correction, and wait patiently for His providence. We are to boldly persevere in our ambitious drive to receive the completely free gift of God's wisdom.

IN DEED If you became a Christian as a child and do not remember well the difference between your new life and your old, you may have lost sight of the radical nature of the new mind. Or, if you once knew the power of transformation but have since let it slide into a hybrid life of the new and the old, you may have lost sight of the constant call of the new creation. In either case, let your mind be transformed and your life renewed again and again. It is a lifelong process for the believer, a work that God will complete the day He takes you into His presence. Never settle for the status quo. Never grow complacent or stale. Never lose sight of the upward call of God out of the ways of this world and into the heart of His will.

JANUARY 11

Romans 12:1-2

The difference between worldliness and godliness is a renewed mind.

—Erwin Lutzer



What If

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. HEBREWS 11:1

JULY 23

Hebrews 11:1, 6

Faith is the sight
of the inward eye.

—Alexander Maclaren

IN WORD You've prayed and tried to muster up faith. You've been through difficulties and tried to cultivate hope. You've read headlines and tried to maintain confidence. All the while, you've struggled with doubts. You've wondered if God will really come through, if trials really will be resolved, if circumstances really will work together for good. You've questioned God.

The human mind is filled with "what ifs." "What if I'm interpreting God's promises wrong?" "What if the Bible is mistaken?" "What if my prayers aren't answered?" "What if I'm not really saved?" Honest doubts nag at us, and they are relentless. Many of our "what ifs" are strategically suggested by the enemy of God; many of them are the natural thinking of a fallen flesh. Either way, we are restless within until we are able to rest in God.

That's part of the reason for prayer—extended, persistent, worshipful prayer. It brings us from a place of doubt to a place of faith. Once we're there, God can answer according to His Word. The time we spend crying out to God is not so much to convince Him as to convince us that He can and He will meet us in our needs. Our worship reminds us of who He is. And knowing who He is will nurture faith like nothing else.

IN DEED When you are faced with "what ifs," how do you respond? Do you cultivate them, thinking of variable upon variable until everything that could possibly go wrong fills your mind? That is not the way of faith. God calls us into the kind of worship that will soak our minds in His unfailing power and love. Wisdom begins with a knowledge of who God is, and wisdom is often a prerequisite to faith. We cannot approach God in belief unless we have first determined that His will toward us is good. Only then can we be certain of what we do not see. Only then can we take hold of His promises. Only then will He reward those who earnestly seek Him.

The Raging River

When the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. JOSHUA 3:14-15



IN WORD Have you ever wondered why God chose a harvest time for the Israelites to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land? The Jordan is a less-than-formidable barrier for much of the year, and forty years of wandering would have provided ample opportunity for them to cross at a more convenient time. But no, Moses' death and the Israelites' arrival on the eastern bank of the river took them to their boundary at exactly its highest moment. Why?

God wants us to follow His wisdom—His guidance, His timing, His purposes. But we often let our circumstances dictate the path we take. The circumstances are formidable? Then we go another direction. The situation is an easy one? Then we follow the path of least resistance. Those whose lives are guided by this dynamic are following the ways of the world. The ways of God will lead us to the Jordan at its highest level. He will promise us deliverance in our darkest moments. He will provide for our needs most abundantly in a barren land. He will be for us a God of the impossible.

IN DEED Do not let the currents of your circumstances dictate the direction you'll take. That's God's domain. His voice is to speak more loudly to us than the boundaries that box us in. We must learn to see Him as the unconstrained God, the God who is not limited by the gaping need of our situation or the restrictiveness of our circumstances.

Why does God work this way? Maybe simply because it brings Him greater glory. When we take only humanly possible steps, we give our humanity the credit. God alone can be praised for overcoming an impossibility. Miracles point to Him. Expect them. Ask for them. Never let the raging river drown out His voice.

JULY 24

Joshua 3:9-17

Faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable, and receives the impossible.

—Corrie ten Boom