

Waiting for God – Psalm 25:3

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Waiting for God – No. 2

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Indeed, none of those who wait for Thee will be ashamed; – Psalm 25:3

Psalm 25 begins and ends with the psalmist David waiting for God. Psalm 25 is an acrostic prayer for instruction, deliverance, and forgiveness and the first acrostic psalm in the psalter. The circumstances under which this psalm was written are uncertain, but it expresses a strong desire on the part of David to live in conformity to God's word. But in order for him to do this, if he is to know anything about God or His will, God must first reveal it to him; not a revelation apart from God's word, but an illumination of what God has already revealed. Private judgment divorced from God's revelation is a failure to be dependent on God and only gives a person the right to be wrong. The path of righteousness is fraught with too many difficulties to be traveled without God's constant presence to guide us. The psalm expresses David's total dependence on God's own revelation for any information about God as well as his complete confidence that God will not disappoint anyone who truly trusts in Him; *none of those who wait for Thee will be ashamed*. David's attitude is one of complete submission and confident expectation in the God whose promises he trusts and believes.

This verse is at the same time a prayer and a promise, but it is a promise with a condition. The promise is conditioned upon waiting for God. The shame of which David speaks is not a fear of being embarrassed, or looking foolish, but rather the disappointment, disillusionment, dismay, and confusion of discovering that the object of our trust is not trustworthy. We can only be disappointed if the object of our trust is unable or unwilling to do what we expected or has promised. Misplaced trust not only brings disappointment, but usually comes with disastrous and catastrophic consequences.

The nation of Israel was put to shame because they trusted in their idols, their false prophets, and their alliances with pagan nations: *"They shall be turned back and be utterly put to shame, who trust in idols, who say to molten images, 'You are our gods' "* (Is 42:17); *"Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray....The seers will be ashamed and the diviners embarrassed. Indeed, they will cover their mouths because there is no answer from God"* (Mic 3:5, 7); *"Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast"* (Is 20:5; cf. Ezk 29:6, 7). How often must people be ashamed, disillusioned, and disappointed by their idols and alliances before God becomes the sole object of their trust? Sadly, for most, He never does.

How many people look to government, financial security, science, technology, education, the right connections, or their own abilities as the panacea for all their problems? How many trust in their religious self-effort and good works to get them to heaven? How many think they are Christians simply because they prayed a prayer, made a "decision", were baptized, or went through a religious ceremony? How many believe they have done enough to pacify God and earn His favor? How many hope that God's threats and warnings of an actual, literal hell are not real? How many place their faith in a god of their own imagination; in God as they would like Him to be? How many people gullibly trust in the words of some self-appointed prophet who claims to receive direct revelation from God and presumes to speak for God, even

when their dreams, visions, and illusory words from God prove to be false or contradict God's word? How many people believe someone's mystical experience is more intriguing and trustworthy than Scripture? How many have ruinously trusted in the charlatanic, unsubstantiated claims of some predatory faith healer?

If we think we can insure our security and well-being by refusing to trust in God but rather our idols and alliances all we will get is shame and disgrace. Scripture offers no encouragement to wait for what God has not promised. We have no reason to hope for that which is contrary to God's revealed will, and it is sheer self-deception to think that God will bless what He has already condemned. We cannot expect to receive what is promised to those who forsake all to follow Christ if we have not forsaken all to follow Christ. We will not receive what is in the promise for trusting Jesus for all things if we do not trust Jesus for all things. But when we wait for that which God has already told us it is His will to give, or when we hope for the fulfillment of a promise, the conditions of which we have sincerely attempted to perform; and when we avert praying for what is in a promise "*with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures*" (Jm 4:3); then we have every confidence to expect we will not be disappointed.

God is all powerful. He has the ability. The giving of a promise implies the sincerity and willingness to give what is promised. God cannot promise what He has no intention of fulfilling. God does not participate in bait and switch tactics. His promises are not hidden under layers of imperceptible contingencies in order to leave Himself an out. It is impossible for God to lie, mislead, or misrepresent. God will never disappoint because He is always trustworthy, and the history of man is replete with the testimonies of those who have waited on Him and not been disappointed; people such as Noah, Abraham, Job, Daniel, William Carey, Adonirum Judson, Hudson Taylor, Martin Luther, and countless others less well-known. Waiting on God is a great expression of trust in God's character, His nature, His attributes, and His promises.

David does not fear disappointment because, "*in Thee I trust*" (2). His trust has only one object – God. It is a single-minded devotion. Spiritual failure is always the result of failing to trust in God alone. Exclusive trust in God never results in spiritual failure, a truth which Scripture unequivocally affirms, "*In You our fathers trusted; they trusted, and You delivered them. To You they cried out, and were delivered; in You they trusted, and were not disappointed*" – i.e. "ashamed" (Ps 22:4, 5). Four times in two verses David emphasizes the exclusive object of "our fathers" trust – "in You, and You, to You, in You – God and God alone was their trust. The exact identity of "our fathers" is irrelevant. The point is that the sole object of their trust was the God who had revealed Himself in Scripture, not some idol, false prophet, mystical experience, political entity, or their own abilities and intrinsic self-worth. As a result they were not disappointed, ashamed, disillusioned, dismayed, or confused. They never suffered the consequences of a misplaced trust.

The prophet Jeremiah emphasized the necessity of God being the sole object of our trust, "*Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD*" (Jer 17:7). Misplaced trust or unrealistic expectations will always result in disappointment, but trust in God is never misplaced. Notice that Jeremiah makes a distinction between trusting *in* the Lord, and trusting the Lord. Many will say they trust *in* God, yet still not have God as the sole object of their trust. Like Israel they have trusted in "*the works of their own hands*" (Jer 1:16). Like the Babylonians "*they offer a sacrifice to their net. And burn incense to their fishing net; because through these things their catch is large, and their food is plentiful*" (Habakkuk 1:16). The actual object of their trust is the means God uses, not *the LORD*. When people say they trust in God, often what they really imply is they trust in the means God employs to meet their particular

need or desire. They trust in God for their provision, until they lose their job and the paycheck disappears. But God hasn't disappeared. He is still the provider. The means may change, but not the God who gives and energizes the means.

Jeremiah goes on to say in this same chapter, "*O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake Thee will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the LORD*" (17:13). Jesus expresses this same principle in Mark 8:38, "*For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*" Many people claim the name of Christ and profess to be Christians who also disown the teachings of Christ. They are ashamed to call sin "sin"; they are ashamed of Jesus' demands of discipleship; they are ashamed of the exclusivity of the gospel; they are ashamed to proclaim the sovereignty of God in salvation; they are ashamed to bear the reproach of Christ and suffer for being a Christian (1 Pt 4:16), they are ashamed to teach the whole counsel of God; they are ashamed to expose false teaching and teachers; they avoid doctrines that have become politically incorrect; they are ashamed to teach on the necessity of holy living and the marks of a true Christian.

Church leaders have turned away on earth, forsaken the fountain of living water, and put their trust in their own vain schemes, man-centered programs, flashy entertainment-driven worship services, ego-inflating messages, subjective mystical experiences; they rely on virtually any gimmick that promises quick results and panders to people's self-interest, but their trust is not God. If God was the sole object of their trust they would trust God enough to rely on God's means and not invent their own. They are ashamed of Jesus as He is so they remove the shame by preaching a sentimentalized and effeminate Jesus who accepts anything and anyone.

For decades now the church has been accommodating itself and its message to the cultural idols of self and the world to the extent that it has little concept of what it means to truly have God as the sole object of their trust. They equate trusting God with presuming upon God to bless their own inventions, and then when people are seduced by a church's carnal enticements the leaders attribute the results to the blessing of God. Like the religious rulers who were afraid to publicly confess Jesus because *they loved the approval* (lit. "glory; honor") *of men rather than the approval of God* (Jn 12:42, 43), they succumb to cultural pressures and personal ambition and opt for a culturally comfortable and popular Christianity. The pull of the world and their own self-interest is just too strong for them to resist.

Some trust the conjuring of self-appointed prophets, or in the nonsensical notion that they can create their own destiny by speaking positive statements into their life, but their trust is not God. Some put their hope in politically restoring some semblance of biblical morality to society, but their hope is not God. People will say they believe in salvation by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone, but then trust in their own decision or religious activity for salvation. Means change, gimmicks and fads come and go, and people can be mistaken, misled, deceptive, and driven by selfish motives. When our trust has been misplaced and things don't go as we expect we often think that God has failed us, or that He has betrayed our trust when in reality what we were trusting was not God. Idols always disappoint, but blessed is the person whose trust is God. A sincere trust in God demands that it be exclusive, not in any false god or human design or deliverer. While God normally works providentially through ordinary means, it is not the means we trust, but the God who created and energizes the means He has ordained and prescribed. The only means we can trust are those which God has promised to bless, and even then it is the faithfulness of God to His promise in which we trust. The tendrils of our heart

must be unwound from other supports before they can cling to God alone.

If anyone had a right to feel ashamed, disillusioned, or confused it was the Apostle Paul. Almost nothing seemed to go right in his ministry. He was constantly being opposed by Jewish zealots outside the church and false teachers inside the church. People whom he had poured his life into would accuse him of everything from being ugly and a poor speaker to a womanizer and embezzler. Some of his closest friends defected from him and the true gospel. It would have been easy for Paul to conclude that maybe he had made a mistake. But Paul had an exclusive trust, even when chained to a Roman guard under house arrest awaiting Cesar's verdict, *"For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death"* (Phil 1:20, 21). Paul's *"earnest expectation and hope"* was in the Holy Spirit's working through Paul for the glory of Jesus Christ. With this as his goal Paul never questioned or doubted how God chose to use him rather he yielded himself in total dependence and trust to God, knowing that as long as He was faithful to Christ's call to preach the gospel he could never *"be put to shame in anything"*. God's faithfulness to His own extends infinitely farther than their capability to trust Him. We can never trust God beyond His ability or willingness. In fact He *"is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think"* (Eph 3:20). We can never trust God too much. If we find our hopes disappointed the fault does not lie with God, but with us; our hope was not in God. Misplaced trust can only result in shame.

David's prayer is not confined merely to his own needs, but for all who wait on God, *"none who wait for Thee will be ashamed."* Affliction produces sympathy for the afflicted. Our own trials elicit empathy for those who are facing trials. Think of how many Christians are in need of this prayer; how many faithful missionaries, pastors, and teachers who give their all, who have given up the right to pursue a more lucrative profession, who pour their life into faithfully and uncompromisingly preaching and teaching God's truth only to be met with hostility, and even worse, apathy. It is easy to preach when you have a willing, eager, and receptive audience, when people are giving you pats on the back, but when week after week and year after year no one seems to care, the only thing that motivates such people is the confidence that God will bless the faithful preaching and teaching of His word, and that this hope will not be disappointed. Think of the Christian wife who strives to live out 1 Peter 3 in the face of her husband's sinful obsession with pornography, or the Christian who refuses to compromise God's word in the work place. Think of all the waiting ones who are losing hope, growing weary, who feel alone, and who fear that their hope will be put to shame. We are to *"strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,"* (Hb 12:12). Like the small house-church to whom the book of Hebrews was written, we *"have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised"* (Hb 10:36).

We must place ourselves simply and unreservedly in the hands of God if we are to truly know Him as He is. If we trust in our own wisdom we will go astray. If we rely on the counsel of men we are in danger of being led into by-paths, man-made schemes, and false teaching. But if we commit ourselves to God and His word, He will guide us into all truth and make our paths straight (Pv 3: 5, 6). Trust in God alone is always vindicated, *"hope does not disappoint"* (Rm 5:5). Hope that produces no shame is the treasure of everyone whose hope is exclusively in the Lord; who, like the psalmist waits on the Lord – *Indeed, none of those who wait for Thee will be ashamed.*