

Waiting for God – Psalm 25:4, 5

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Waiting for God – No. 3

February, 2014

*“Make me to know Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths.
Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my
salvation; for Thee I wait all the day.” – Psalm 25:4, 5*

David’s mood in Psalm 25 now changes from one of confident expectation and trust to that of humble submission, because only a heart submissive to God’s word can have the confidence of never being disappointed by God. An unsubmissive, rebellious heart can never be a confident heart. A rebellious heart has no grounds on which to base its confidence because it refuses to wait on God.

A standard truism popular among those who attempt to justify integrating knowledge from secular disciplines with the truth of Scripture is, “All truth is God’s truth.” While this may be true, it is not the whole truth. All truth is indeed God’s truth, but not all truth is equal. Not all truth has the same degree of *certainty*. Many beliefs that were once considered true have since been proven to be false. Many new discoveries are reported with tentative “if, then” statements; “if this proves to be correct, then such and such is true.” Almost everyday some food that was reported to be bad for us is now good or benign, and what was thought to be good for us is now bad. Scientific theories are constantly being revised.

Neither does all truth have the same *authority*. No absolute authority exists in the field of medicine, and many functions of the human body are still a mystery to physicians, physiologists, and biologists. No secular discipline has within its ranks those who are the final authority in their respective field of study. So to place the knowledge discovered within secular disciplines on a par with the truth of Scripture is to make an unjustified and extremely arrogant comparison. It places the fallible discoveries of men and women on an equal footing with infallible Scripture. The truth of Scripture alone is completely certain and authoritative because it is the divinely inspired word of God.

Adolphe Monod (1802-1856) was one of the great evangelical preachers of the 19th century and one of the greatest French-speaking preachers of all time. One contemporary described him “As a defender of the truth that is in Christ, he had the heart of a lion; as a Christian, he had the heart and simplicity of a small child, the heart of a lamb.” His staunch defense of biblical truth eventually led to his dismissal from his church by the French government, becoming the first pastor for which no specific cause was given by the government for his removal. He declined the offer of a teaching position at the new School of Theology in Geneva and instead agreed to shepherd a small, obscure group of poor people who had already left the church from which he was dismissed. Being encouraged by his older brother Frederic that, “The Christians of Lyon must not be abandoned. It is of great importance to show the consistories that if they can remove faithful pastors from the national church, they cannot remove the gospel from those places where it has begun to be preached”, he labored there the rest of his life. He gave voice to his convictions when he declared,

If faith has not for its basis a testimony of God to which we must submit, as to an authority exterior to our personal judgment, and independent of it, then faith is no faith....The more I study the Scriptures, the example of Christ, and of the apostles, and the history of my own heart, the more I am convinced, that a testimony of God, placed without us and above us, exempt from all intermixture of sin and error which belong to a fallen race, and received with submission on the sole authority of God, is the true basis of faith. (*The Life of Adolphe Monod*, Published by his family, 1885, 224, 357)

When people attempt to integrate human knowledge and experience with the Bible, it is always the Bible that ends up being compromised; it is always the Bible that must be changed to harmonize with man's discoveries and experiences. Very rarely, if ever, are man's findings and experiences reexamined to make them harmonize with Scripture. Evolution never gives an inch when attempts are made to harmonize the millions of years required for evolution with the biblical account of creation. Humanistic psychology doesn't budge from its view of man and the source of his problems when integrated with the Bible. When someone claims to have had a mystical experience it is the Bible which is judged by the experience and not vice-versa, and when someone claims to have received extra-biblical revelation direct from God, it is the Bible's rejection of such claims as false teachings and the product of someone's own imagination that is called into question. Ultimately the aftermath of all attempts to integrate man's discoveries and experiences with the Bible are the corruption of God's word, the introduction of confusion into the life of the church, and the creation of a fertile environment in which a multitude of false teachings and heresies flourish.

David is not interested in a mixture of human and divine knowledge. He desires to imitate God, and for this goal only God's truth will suffice. An amalgamation of divine and human wisdom only breeds confusion and error. Only God's word rightly taught and understood can equip a person to live a life that is pleasing to God, which should be the goal of all who claim to love God. When human ideas and personal experiences are imposed on God's word the end result is a mixture of truth and error, with the truth becoming corrupted and distorted by the error. God works through His word, and when His word becomes contaminated it is no longer His word. This is why God told the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, "*And if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman*" (Jer 15:19); "*Her (i.e. Israel's) priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean...*" (Ezk 22:26).

Sadly, many prominent pastors, theologians, and Bible teachers today seem to be incapable of distinguishing between the precious and the worthless. They are confused about what is holy and what is profane. They seem unable to teach the difference between the unclean and the clean. They are theological fence-sitters who don't seem to be able to tell truth from error. They describe themselves as "open but cautious" when it comes to the excesses, errors, and heresies that have been introduced into the church by the charismatic movement, and as a result they implicitly or explicitly endorse the very people who propagate its destructive teachings. They give these false teachers a credibility they could never have on their own, they introduce massive confusion into the church, and ultimately they leave the truth corrupted by not distinguishing between the precious and the worthless. When divine revelation and human knowledge and experience are thrown together in the same bag the result is a mixture of holy and profane with no distinction made between the unclean and the clean, the precious and the worthless, between the true

and the false. As a result people have no sure guide to know God's ways, His paths, and His truth, and every man's ways become right in his or her own eyes. Confusion reigns, tolerance of error becomes a virtuous sign of humility, and anything goes.

Tragically for the church this is the characteristic of most preaching today; a mixture of truth and error, of divine revelation and human opinion. The Bible becomes merely a source from which to cherry-pick a few verses to support platitudes and motivational messages without any consideration for their context or true meaning. Yet most professing Christians think they are being fed a diet of God's word every Sunday. That is because the food people grow up with is the food with which they are accustomed, and since it is what they are accustomed to it is what they prefer. This is why true preaching that accurately explains God's word in its context and applies it to our life is unpalatable to most people and is as unfamiliar and distasteful as an exotic foreign food. This explains the biblical and theological ignorance that dominates the church today and why most people are confused as to what a Christian is and how a person becomes a Christian. Handling accurately the word of truth, being constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine, and being diligent to present ones self approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed is seen as an unnecessary distraction to ministry, with "ministry" being defined as concocting new and creative ways to generate numerical growth. As one recent church-growth guru has said, "*There are ways of doing church that no one has thought of yet.*" No doubt, but did Jesus entrust the "doing" of His church to the ingenuity of man's brain? Are we to apply the same entrepreneurial creativity used to sell hamburgers to the church? Are His prescribed means – the preaching and teaching of His word – so inadequate and unreliable they cannot be trusted to effect His ends? No wonder the words "church", "Christian", and "Christianity" have essentially lost all their original meaning.

In a chapel address delivered in 1916 to students at Princeton Theological Seminary, the great Princeton theologian B.B. Warfield once remarked,

How many worthy words have already died under our very eyes, because we did not take care of them!....If you persist in calling people who are not gentlemen by the name of gentleman, you do not make them gentlemen by so calling them, but you end up making the word gentleman mean that kind of people....Does the word "Christianity" any longer bear any definite meaning? Men are debating on all sides of us what Christianity really is....People set upon calling unchristian things Christian are simply washing all meaning out of the name. If everything that is called Christianity in these days is Christianity, then there is no such thing as Christianity. A name applied indiscriminately to everything, designates nothing....But the dying of the words is not the saddest thing which we see here. The saddest thing is the dying out of the hearts of men of the things for which the words stand. (*The Works of B.B. Warfield*, Baker, 1981, Vol. 2, 395-397)

For centuries people have been attaching the words "church" and "Christian" to that which is neither the church nor Christian to the point where all meaning has been essentially washed out of the words. The "church" is no longer the body of Christ and the pillar and support of the truth, but an independent entity that exists solely for its own agenda. It promotes itself not Jesus Christ. Jesus exists for the church, not the church for Jesus. The perpetuation of itself, by itself, for itself has become the primary occupation of this "church". It has become its own motivation for existing. Jesus has become the means to an end for this "church" – the perpetuation and expansion of itself – rather than its Cornerstone and reason for existence. Jesus is reduced both in His person and work to the level of His "followers", His indispensableness is subverted, and the result is a Christless

Christianity. Of course some other function other than redemption can be found for Jesus within this “church”, such as being the means to self-improvement, self-satisfaction, and self-fulfillment, or the champion of social justice, or the guardian of morality and religious freedom. Whatever function Jesus serves within this “church” that function is decidedly humanitarian, not redemptive. And the people who believe in this Jesus are called “Christian” thereby making the word refer to that kind of people. This systematic redefining of Christianity was taking place one-hundred years ago in Warfield’s day,

The process is exceedingly simple. “Our religion” is certainly Christianity, because *real* Christianity is, of course, just “our religion.” Everything else in “actual phenomenal Christianity” is to be discarded because it is not included in “our religion”He brings with him to the investigation of the teaching of Jesus, for example, a whole body of presuppositions, under the influence of which he forces his material into preconceived molds....he simply makes his reconstructed version of Jesus’ Christianity the sole Christianity which he will recognize. (*The Works of B.B. Warfield*, Baker, 1981 Vol. 3, 410, 414)

Sadly, what Warfield described has become the norm today – a “Christianity” completely separated from its historical doctrines and the authority of Scripture. When leading evangelicals extoll the pope as a great Christian leader, and those who adhere to Roman Catholic dogma are considered Christian – dogma that has bestowed on Mary the titles ‘Queen of Heaven’ and ‘Mother of God’, and ascribes to her the attributes of God thus effectively making her a goddess and the primary object of their worship, making her the dispenser of all divine grace, even salvation, and to whom all owe obedience, even God – not only is it clear that these leaders have redefined what it is to be Christian and are incapable of distinguishing between the precious and the worthless, but they are even willing to redefine the gospel, thus washing all meaning out of the words “Christian” and “Christianity”. It is not loving, pastoral, or Christian to grant the title “Christianity” to an idolatrous system that continues to deceive millions, or to consider as “Christians” those who adhere to and propagate this system. When people such as Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, Rob Bell, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copland, Joyce Meyers, Sarah Young and a host of others of this stripe are considered by most to be Christian and teach a Christian message it becomes clear that the word “Christianity” has been spread so thin as to have lost any real meaning. Tragically, it is “Christianity” redefined that most think of as true Christianity and “church” as a humanitarian entrepreneurial enterprise designed to entertain, pander to our preferences and self-interest, and help us achieve self-fulfillment that people consider the church.

David does not want confusing and conflicting messages, he is not interested in redefined and watered-down theology, he has no taste for a mixture of holy and profane, he is not looking for new, private, mystical, subjective revelation from God; rather he wants *truth*, he longs for *truth*, he cries out for *truth* – God’s objective truth as revealed in His written word. He has an earnest desire to do God’s will and so he seeks God’s *truth*. David’s plea is to know “*Thy ways; Thy paths; Thy truth*”. God’s ways are not man’s ways. God’s “ways” and “paths” are those that are consistent with God’s expectations, prescriptions, and principles that He has revealed only in His “*truth*”.

A sincere desire to do God’s will reflects a heart that is submissive to divine instructions, and it is this kind of heart for which David prays four times: “*Make me know* (i.e. “acquaint me; show me”); *teach me; lead me; teach me*”. David is not looking to chart his own course, to invent his own methods, or make God’s word relevant to his life. He is not

looking to import his own ideas and experiences into Scripture, as if God's word needed his input. His desire is to be *instructed from* God's word, not *contribute to* God's word. David is acknowledging his complete and utter dependence on divine revelation to know anything about God and His will. The desire of his heart is to know God's will and to do it, and for this he needs divine instruction. He wants his life to conform to God's word, not to conform God's word to his life. David wants God to impress His truth upon him, not impose his own prejudices, desires, and experiences on God's word. David knew himself well enough to know he could not trust his own heart; he knew how prone men and women are to self-deception; he knew our penchant for twisting Scripture to our own advantage; he knew our fondness for conforming the Bible to our own desires, preferences, and experiences; he knew how people foist their own presuppositions and experiences on God's word.

We find here in David's prayer an important spiritual principle – *a submissive heart always precedes a hunger for truth*. Or to state it another way, *hunger for biblical truth is always the byproduct of a submissive heart*. A sincere desire for obedience is the motivation for seeking God's truth. An unsubmissive heart will never hunger for God's truth. People who have no hunger for God's truth have no desire to do God's will, and people who have no desire to do God's will do not hunger for God's truth. People who want to distort and add to God's word have no desire to do God's will; rather they distort and add because they do not like God's clearly revealed will, and refuse to submit to His will. They will change God's word to fit their preferences and practice. People who only turn to Scripture simply to find validation for their own plans, presuppositions, ideas, and desires have no longing to do God's will. Their heart remains unsubmissive and in opposition to God's truth. David's plea for divine instruction comes from the depths of a heart submitted to God's will.

Jesus emphasized this same principle while teaching in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus exposed the real reason why the Jews rejected His teaching, "*If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself* (Jn 7:17). A sincere willingness to do the will of God will always result in knowing whether Jesus' words were from God or some other source; whether it is divine truth or the product of someone's imagination; whether His words are true or false. This was why the majority of people to whom Jesus spoke rejected His word – they simply were unwilling to do God's will; they did not like the implications which Jesus' teaching would have on their lives, "*you do not have the love of God in yourselves*", therefore they had no desire to do His will and know His word (Jn 5:42).

In this text Jesus exposes the source of all the confusion surrounding God's word. Here we see why people pursue mystical experiences, why they claim to receive extra-biblical revelation, why they impose their own prejudices and experiences on God's word, why they redefine Christianity, why they reject biblical doctrines, and why they twist Scripture to fit their life. People are confused because they are unwilling to submit their heart and mind to God's revelation; they do not like the implications therefore they are unwilling to do His will. Self-interest is the reason people impose their own ideas and experiences on Scripture, "*He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory;*" (Jn 7:18), and when people set themselves up as judges of God's word, or impose their own ideas and experiences on Scripture, or claim to be recipients of private revelation from God, they are simply revealing the narcissistic and arrogant bent of their own mind. In the words of Jesus, they speak *from themselves* and seek *their own* glory. They are self-absorbed and their true object of worship is themselves.

Doing God's will may necessitate holding to truths that are completely counter-

cultural; it may mean that you remain married instead of divorcing; you may have to sever some relationships; you may have to give up some lust you idolize; it may require a drastic alteration in your lifestyle; you may have to reexamine some of your theology; you may have to admit that your experience is not what you imagined it to be or that it is simply a product of your own imagination; you may have to follow Jesus down a path you would have never chosen for yourself; you will have to admit all your self-effort and self-righteousness is worthless; you will have to admit you are a sinner deserving of God's holy wrath; you will have to turn from and forsake all your sin; you will have to trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior; you will have to admit your complete and absolute dependence on God's word and on His power and grace to save you from eternal torment in hell; you will have to submit your own will to the will of God, and this is something most people are not willing to do so they remain hopelessly confused and end up being tossed about by every wind of doctrine and falling prey to wolves, hirelings, thieves, robbers, and strangers (Jn 10:1-13).

David's submission is not directed toward the discoveries of human wisdom, not to a legalistic set of man-made rules, not to some religious system, not to a list of cultural taboos, not to some moralistic code, not to his own or other's anecdotal, subjective mystical experiences, and not to his own lusts and desires, but to his Savior, "*For Thou art the God of my salvation*". God's moral law is a reflection of His immutable character, therefore to submit to God's instructions, to trust in His promises and warnings, and to conform our life to His holy will revealed in His word is to submit our minds and lives to God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture and in the Person of Jesus Christ. Only the God of his salvation could "*make, teach, lead, and teach*" David to "*know Thy ways, Thy paths, Thy truth*". And the only place God has revealed His "ways", His "paths", His "truth", and His will for mankind is in His word.

For this David was willing to "*wait all the day*." Submission to God's will finds its fullest expression in daily denying self, taking up a cross, and continuously trusting God's word, His character, and His promises no matter what our temporal circumstances may seem to be. It is trusting in that whatever our circumstances, be they health or sickness, prosperity or poverty, comfort or trials, suffering or ease, they are the ones that are best for us at this time. God is using them to teach and lead us to know Him as He really is, to bring us to a genuine experiential knowledge of Himself, so we might worship Him as He really is. As David affirms in verse 10 of this psalm, "*All the ways of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth, to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.*" Notice, "*all the ways of the LORD*", not just the ones we like or agree with. We have no problem accepting prosperity, health, a happy home life, security, influence and prestige as expressions of God's love and faithfulness. But are we willing to accept that times of tragedy, sickness, failure, devastating loss, hostility, opposition, trials, obscurity, and persecution are also expressions of God's love? Do we trust that He has a higher purpose for allowing us to suffer – that one of these purposes is to increase our trust in Him, His word, His promises, and His character; to wean us from our dependency on self and the world and teach us to be totally dependent on Him?

Only those who are willing to "*wait all the day*" will ever truly know God's ways, God's paths, and His truth. If you mix human wisdom, mystical experiences, and imaginary messages with God's word, if you manipulate Scripture to fit your life, if you compromise biblical truth to accommodate the whims of the culture, if you remove from Scripture what is offensive to the unregenerate mind, if you invent your own methods rather than rely on

God's means, if you redefine what it is to be Christian, you simply demonstrate that your commitment to follow His ways, His paths, and His truth is woefully deficient. To one degree or another, your heart remains unsubmitive to His word. At best your dependence on God's word is partial, not total, and partial dependence is the same as selective obedience which is the same as out-and-out rebellion against God.

Unbelief the soul dismays,
What objections will it raise!
But true faith securely leans
On the promise, in the means.

If to faith it once be known,
God has said, "It shall be done,
And in this appointed way;"
Faith has then no more to say.

(From the Hymn *Great Effects by Weak Means* by John Newton)

A submissive heart is willing to "*wait all the day*", it is willing to continuously and exclusively trust in "*the God of my salvation*", even in the face of overwhelming circumstances, opposition from the culture, the lure of worldly success, and our own fallen reasoning. God will not disclose Himself to someone who has no intention of submitting themselves to His will, but rather His self-disclosure is reserved exclusively for those whose hearts and minds are submitted to Him, "*He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and disclose Myself to him*" (Jn 14:21). This is what made David a man after God's own heart, because David's heart longed to know and love God as He really is, which God only reveals in His divine revelation, the Bible, and in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 1:18; Hb 1:3).- *Make me know Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths, lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee I wait all the day.*
