

Date: April 1, 2012

Subject: How Long...?

Greetings my beloved friend, how are you doing? i pray you are well, with your mind firmly set on those glorious things in heaven that await our "departure" (cf. 2 Timothy 4:6 ff).

This week i thought we might read a few verses together about a most serious, most applicable topic, "How long...?"

This question is asked many times in the Bible; in fact, when we remember, "How long...?" most of us probably think of Revelation 6:10 where the believers <sup>in heaven</sup> are crying with a loud voice, saying,

"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

It's the "so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) who have gone before us and are in heaven with the Lord awaiting that final resurrection to come and the completion of God's will "in earth, as it is in heaven;" which desire, we ~~also~~ <sup>while</sup> who are "alive and remain" have ~~now not~~ "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,

"to wit, the redemption of our body." (Rom. 8:23)

This is a sincere desire of any true Christian, and so we may ask, "How long...?" but this will not be the focus of our study this week, God willing, we can look at that another time. Although we will still develop this question, "How long...?" however, it's not in the context of expressing our desires to God; but rather, His desires towards us; God is asking you, me, and everyone else, "How long...?"

Before we begin, let's share a word of prayer together and ask God's blessing upon the reading of this letter - without which, these would be just dead words on a page...

"Dear Father, O Lord we thank Thee for allowing us the benefit of gathering together in heart and spirit for edification, comfort of the Scriptures, and even loving rebuke - Whatsoever Thou art pleased to bless with Thy gracious Holy Spirit, as we seek Thy whole counsel and cherish Thy every word.

O righteous Father, please forgive us of our sins,



please forgive our pride, our discontent, our lusts, our selfishness, and even our sins of ignorance - Not that Thou art unjust and wouldest look the other way; no, but because Thou art faithful and just for what Thou hast done in Jesus Christ to redeem a people for Thyself; and to present us to Thyself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; for Thou alone art righteous and merciful.

And now, O Lord, we desire Thee to work; to send forth Thy free Spirit and to bless this message to the hearts and minds of Thy people whithersoever Thy Holy Spirit will find them, to convict, to comfort, and to bring forth fruit unto Thee. Father, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen."

As mentioned earlier, the question is asked many times in the Bible, "How long...?" For example, as Job began to struggle with what befell him by the providence of God, he said,

"How long wilt Thou not depart from me,

Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle? I have sinned; what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou preserver of men? Why hast Thou set me as a mark against Thee, so that I am a burden to myself?"

- Job 7:19-20

Later on, Job asks those who were arguing with him,

"How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?" - Job 19:2

Sometimes we doubt God's mercies and feel as though He has forgotten us.

"How long wilt Thou forget me [said King David], O Jehovah? for ever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" - Ps. 13:1-2

At times we may feel as though God is not taking notice of us anymore, like He is just looking the other way and we are left to struggle on our own,

"Lord, how long wilt Thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions." - Ps. 35:17

Have you ever heard the expression, "the heavens are like brass"? Well as part of disobedience to God, He says in Deuteronomy 28:23

"And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron."

It's like our prayers are not entering heaven, like they are blocked from entering God's ears,

"O Jehovah God of hosts, how long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people?" - Ps. 80:4

These are all sincere questions from sincere believers from the past; yet how many of us have asked the same questions? We feel God's hand of affliction pressing us sore, and we wonder, "How long...?" We feel abandoned and forgotten by the One we most desire to be remembered, and we wonder, "How long...?" Our most fervent prayers with strong crying and tears,



seem to fall upon deaf ears, and we wonder, "How long...?"

If we remain sensitive to the searchings of the Holy Spirit we know something is wrong, something is not right. We remember His mercy, His love, and O how we rejoiced then; and so we pray as Moses, for the Lord to return,

"Return, O Jehovah, how long? And let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil."

- Psalm 90:13-15

But what we fail to realize, is that before we started asking God, "How long...?" - God was asking us, "How long...?" (Exodus 16:28) "And Jehovah said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws?" (Numbers 14:11) "How long will this people provoke Me? And how long will it be before they believe Me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?" (verse 27) "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against Me?"

In Jeremiah 31:22 God refers to His people as a, "backsliding daughter", and because of our stubbornness He calls us "a backsliding heifer" (Hosea 4:16). A stubborn cow that takes a couple steps and slides right back with a pathetic ~~bleat~~ "bellow" ... Never moving forward.

How many times are we going to look for the date of Christ's Return when He has told us plainly, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, ..." (Mat. 24:36)? How many times are we going to say "Thus saith the LORD" when the LORD hath not said? How many times are we going to work ourselves into a frenzy and lose focus of our rest in Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." ? (Mat. 11:28). How many times will we forsake the Fountain of Living Waters, for broken cisterns that can hold no water? (cf. Jer. 2:13).

Do you think you can just continue on like all is well with your soul? Do you think you have done no wrong, and when God pleads you to return you say, "Wherein shall we return?" (Malachi 3:7). So you frolic about in your pride, as an ox to the slaughter; but God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble, as we read in James 4:5-8



"Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy? But He gives more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."

The person to resist is the devil, not God; the devil cannot give you grace, he only seeks to destroy you; but God gives grace, draw nigh to Him and He will draw nigh to you.

"He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers" the Bible says, "shall be abomination." (Pro. 28:9). Only God knows "the thoughts and intents" of our heart, He sees everything as naked and open - we cannot hide anything from Him, so even our best attempts to cover our sins ~~are~~ are not only vain, but at best, the only view from which we cover our sins, is from other men.

"He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." - Pro. 28:13



You see beloved, it's not about pointing the finger at other people, it's about pointing the finger at ourselves, and acknowledging our sin to God and returning to Him.

"Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith Jehovah; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith Jehovah, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against Jehovah thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed My voice, saith Jehovah. Turn, O backsliding children, saith Jehovah; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." - Jeremiah 3:12-15

In verse 13 God pleads with us, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity,..." - it's like a spiritual slap in the face, "Wake up! What's wrong with you?! Just return to Me, and I will forgive abundantly..."

Before we continue walking, we must ensure we are headed in the right direction; and to think everything is perfect and all is well, is the wrong attitude for anyone to have.

Sadly, there are still some teaching other "dates," and while they appeal to your emotions and make statements in BIG CAPITOL LETTERS because they "have the truth" and all "true believers ~~will~~ must agree" with their errors, even hurling terrible accusations against Family Radio... Will you run after them again? Will you repeat the same mistakes? Or will you return unto the Lord? There are no innocent parties here - all are guilty - but will we receive correction? "Only acknowledge thine iniquity..." says God, and we should freely do so without being bitter.

The journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step, let it be each our our prayers to the Lord, that our first step is one of repentance and return to Him in truth and ask Him to,

"Order my steps in Thy Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Ps. 119:133

Our "forty year" journey begins when God redeems us from "Egypt" - that is, when He calls us out of this world and we begin to walk by faith until we reach



the end of this spiritual "forty years" in the wilderness and enter "Canaan" to be with the Lord. Now the number forty represents testing... but forty represents something a whole lot more than just testing...

The Israelites were tested for forty years in the wilderness, and yet they failed almost every test... to this day, we are tested... and we fail... do we quit? Do we give up? Do we walk away...?

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" - John 6:68

Why didn't Simon Peter walk away? We read in John 6:66

"From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."

Many others walked away, why didn't Peter? Verse 67

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?"

It's as if He said, "If you want to go, go... ~~that's~~ Is that what you want...?"

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Peter didn't walk away because God revealed to Peter Who Christ is (see Matthew 16:13-17); therefore Peter says in verse 69,

"And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Now later on, Peter denies Christ, not once, but three times; therefore, he failed the test, not once, but three times... Peter was a true believer (still is), yet even ~~in~~ him we see fail in his testings during his "forty year" spiritual journey while in this world...

Forty... testing... why? Because we are not the centerpiece during our "forty years" - God is, and our "forty years" ~~to~~ displays His faithfulness.

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." - 2 Timothy 2:11-13



It is God's unchangeable faithfulness, beloved, that is displayed in such a magnificent way that God had the Apostle Paul write,

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God," - Ephesians 3:8-10

All the way back to the Garden of Eden - about 13,024 years ago - all the way to now, and all the way until that last day and then for all eternity... "the manifold wisdom of God" is displayed... how? By His faithfulness to His church.

God's elect from every nation, kindred, and tongue - His church - who, once saved, live in perfect obedience...? No, no beloved, not at all, for then our faithfulness would be on display; but no, it is God's faithfulness on His vessels of mercy, to make known the riches of His glory,

"What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has called, not of the Jew only, but also of the Gentiles?"

- Romans 9:22-24

Our Lord Jesus Christ is our faithfulness, we are perfectly faithful in Him - He imputes His righteousness to our account. It's like as soon as we are born we owe God 1 Billion dollars (of course this doesn't even scratch the surface, but for purposes of illustration), now once people find religion, they think they can build themselves out of this debt by their obedience to the law of God; but this does not get us out of debt, but only puts us further into debt. It's only because of God's faithfulness, and to redeem a people for Himself, Christ payed that debt, His righteousness, now imputed to us.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." - Romans 8:1



In the beginning there was the threat of the law,

"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." - Genesis 2:16-17

Did that stop us from sinning...? No, Adam ate of that forbidden fruit and we all died in him (1 Cor. 15:22). Did this hinder God's faithfulness? Absolutely not, in fact, it couldn't, for all "the works were finished from the foundation of the world." (Heb. 4:3). What is God showing us...? What is He teaching us...? That when God makes a promise, He is faithful in keeping His promises - faithful even unto death - and this becomes our refuge and the most glorious hope we can ever have,

"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability [i.e. unchangeableness] of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." - Hebrews 6:17-20

So, God is completely faithful, and we are not, and if the threat and curse of the law didn't keep us from sin... what would...?

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree:" - Galatians 3:13

Christ became and removed the curse for us and so now it is "the love of Christ" that "constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14), we want to obey Him because of His great love for us.

Now some people think that because Christ gives us rest from all our labours (see Mat. 11:28-30), that we can just do nothing about our sins and that He will do it all for us, and we are to be totally passive.



But the rest Christ gives us ~~is~~ is in the context of salvation, we are saved by grace; however, if we sin Christ doesn't mean to give us "rest" to just keep on sinning - this would only put the blame on God. Listen to the Apostle Paul's battle with sin in Romans 7, listen to what he writes in 1 Corinthians 9:27

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Did Paul just "rest" in his sin? No, rather Christ's rest desired him not to sin; <sup>2</sup> This becomes our desire to glorify God by way of our obedience to His Word,

"according as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,..."

- 2 Peter 1:3

And so its in this way we "can do all things through Christ who strengthens" us (Phil. 4:13). We don't just sit around and wait for some ~~supernatural~~ <sup>mystical feeling</sup> ~~power~~ to stop us in our sin. God has given us the riches of His Holy Spirit and so "our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. 3:5). The fact is beloved, is that if we are

Christ's, not only has He made us willing (see Psalm 110:3 and Matthew 26:41); but we ought to be growing in grace, being further sanctified a little more each day by His Spirit, mortifying the deeds of our flesh, glorifying God Who is working in us to do so (Phil. 2:13) because of His abounding grace towards us; these are the results of Christ's glorious rest He freely gives to sinners,

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:"

- 2 Cor. 9:8

How long will you love simplicity (Pro. 1:22)? How long will you turn His glory into shame (Ps. 4:2)? How long will you imagine mischief against others (Ps. 62:3)? How long will vain thoughts lodge within thee (Jer. 4:14)? How long will you prophecy deceits (Jer. 23:26)? How long will you sleep...

"How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little ~~slumber~~ slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travels, and thy want as an armed man."

- Proverbs 6:9-11



It is my sincerest prayer that we never lose focus of the great hope we have in Christ ~~the~~ Jesus and that we do not become bitter or offended the rest of our days, but to rejoice in His so great salvation and the riches of faith He freely gives; but not without the warning... God is rightfully jealous, no matter who you are, no matter what you have done, no matter what you are going through - that Great Day is coming, and it will come, when God shall truly judge all the earth. The soul searching question - may God's spirit convict - though His hand is stretched out still, He may be asking you... "How long...?"

My love and prayers be with you all.

Your servant for Jesus' sake,

Rev. J. W. W.

- 2 Cor. 4:1-5

Day of Judgment! Day of Wonders! Newton 1774

Day of judgment! Day of wonders! Hark! The trumpet's awful sound,  
louder than a thousand thunders, shakes the vast creation round.  
How the summons will the sinner's heart confound!

See the Judge, our nature wearing, clothed in majesty divine;  
you who long for His appearing then shall say, This God is mine!  
Gracious Saviour, Own me in that Day as Thine.

At His call the dead awaken, rise to life from earth and sea;  
all the powers of nature, shaken by His looks, prepare to flee.  
Careless sinner, what will then become of thee?

But to those who have confessed, loved and served the Lord below,  
He will say, Come near, ye blessed, see the Kingdom I bestow;  
you forever shall my love and glory know.