

Intro

Sometimes we find ourselves helpless and at a loss. Inevitably, all of us find ourselves in a bind and waiting for resolution. Sometimes a problem arises that is beyond our control, and there's no end in sight.

The waiting is agonizing. Frustration boils over. Despair seeps in. There's no promise in Scripture that tells me how long my trial is going to last. There's no promise in Scripture that tells me how this is going to end. And there's no instruction in Scripture that tells me how to solve my problem.

What is it we really want? Whatever it is...an annoyance, an uncertainty, a contentious relationship, an exhausting season of work overload and busyness, a disruption of "normal" life, a financial threat, physical suffering...whatever it is, we just want it to end!

What do you do when it won't end? When it lingers on. Do you become impatient? Do you question God? Do you give up? What can you do?

This morning Psalm 25 teaches us...

BIG IDEA: At times God calls us to wait for him to act

As we proceed let's ask this question...

ANALYTICAL QUESTION: When facing external threats, how should we go about waiting for God to act?

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Passage Focus

Last week: how we should respond to dangerous threats

This week: how we should go about waiting on God to act for us

Waiting 1: Wait by calling on God with confidence (25:1-3, 12-20, 22)

Explanation

David was waiting on God (25:3, 5, 21). Waiting in this context doesn't mean waiting in line at the grocery store. It doesn't mean waiting for your favorite TV show to come on. It means waiting expectantly for God to act for you. It's a waiting that involves hopeful expectation that God will come to your aid. So what was David waiting for God to do?

Apparently he was in danger. Enemies were present:

- David feared that these enemies would "exult" over him (25:2).
- David feared being "put to shame" (25:2)
- David's enemies inspired fear because they were "treacherous" (25:3)

- David needed God to “pluck my feet out of the net (25:15)” = rescue
- David’s foes were “many” and had “violent hatred” for David (25:19)
- So David was in desperate need for God to “guard my soul” (= life) and “deliver me” (25:20)

Things didn’t look good. Outside assistance was necessary. David need God to intervene.

How was this danger affecting David?

- he feared public shame: “let me not be put to shame” (25:2)
- he was lonely (25:16) = isolation isn’t a good thing!
- he was afflicted (25:16, 18) = his circumstances left him vulnerable
- multiple “distresses” (= great external pressures) surrounded him so that “The troubles of my heart are enlarged” (25:17) → external pressures were troubling his heart (thoughts, emotions)

External threats had isolated David from his friends and family, and David was vulnerable to physical harm and public shame. As a result, David’s heart was deeply disturbed to the point that his internal anguish was multiplying. He was vulnerable emotionally.

This is your **ILLUSTRATION**: a man whose internal anguish is multiplying as he waits on God to deliver him from dangerous enemies who are seeking his death and public shame

Can you identify with David’s plight? You may not have a treacherous army seeking to inflict violence on you, but at some point you’ve probably faced external dangers or pressures that multiplied anguish in your heart. Maybe financial pressures or medical problems or even threats of violence. Maybe current pressures created by the Coronavirus outbreak. Have you ever experienced at time when you found yourself deeply vulnerable? Or a time when shame was imminent and you feared being a failure? What did you feel? What anguish went through your heart? Can you identify with David? Have you ever felt paralyzed and helpless?

Because of his distress, David called on God. Waiting with expectation for God to act, he called on to act. **He both waited and pleaded for help!** Look at the ways that David trusts God as he calls for deliverance:

- 1) He trusts that God is able to deliver his people

My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net. (25:15)

→ he believes God can end this

- 2) He trusts that God cares for his people

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. ¹⁷ The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. ¹⁸ Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins. ¹⁹ Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me. (25:16-19)

→ he believes God is concerned so he shares his heart

- 3) He trusts that God provides for his people

His soul [the one who fears God] shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land. (25:13)

→ he believes God helps those who fear him

Application

David is in a distressing and dire situation. But he believes God is able to deliver him, God cares for him, and God provides for those who fear him. All while waiting for God to act. What we have here is a model response. This is how we should relate to God when we find ourselves in a dire circumstance that lingers on.

Maybe this troubles you. Maybe you're thinking, "This sounds so easy, but why is it such a struggle for me? Why can't I wait confidently for God to act?" Well, be encouraged. There are some hints that David struggled too. It wasn't just a settled faith with perfect peace ever after. It wasn't one simple resolution and out of mind. No, he suffered anguish while he waited: "the troubles of my heart are enlarged (25:17)." He urgently longed for God to act: "Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you (25:20)." There are hints that David struggled with the fact that God hadn't intervened yet. Confidence mingled with doubt. He appeals to God to remember three times (25:6-7). Later he appeals to God to consider his situation twice (25:18-19). Does God see what I'm going through? Has he forgotten about me? These are the questions we wrestle with when we wait for God to act.

Maybe you're asking yourself, why should we ask God to look at what he already sees? Was David insinuating God was negligent? Two responses are in order. First, we share with God what he already knows because this is how we relate to God as his children. Like a child expresses their dependence on a parent. In the Creator-creature relationship we are needy, and God is the provider. And God wants us to bring our needs and concerns before him (Ps 62:8; Phil 4:6-7; 1 Pet 5:7). One way we engage in relationship with God is by sharing our concerns with him.

Second, God works through means. The way God set up the universe, means are necessary to accomplish ends (goals). For example, God has purposed that sinners would be saved through our gospel proclamation. Likewise, God has purposed that outcomes would be accomplished through prayer. In other words, God has designed the world in such a way that prayer is a channel through which his purposes come to pass. Like prayer serving as a means by which David is delivered. One way God mercifully provides for us during trials is by offering his ear in prayer. And by acting on our requests.

Waiting 2: Wait by seeking God for wisdom (25:4-5, 8-9, 12)

Explanation

As we endure prolonged dangers, threats, and trials, we don't become paralyzed. We don't become inactive. Our lives don't come to a halt. Despite impending threats, David called on God for instruction:

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. ⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. (25:4-5)

Why should God show David the truth? Because God is his salvation and because God is the one he waits for to deliver him. In other words, **David believes that God reveals truth to those who trust in him to act on their behalf.**

Here David instructs us in the prerequisites for learning: God will instruct sinners, but we have to come to him with the right posture. We need to come with humility (25:8-9). If we come to God as teachable children who recognize that we don't know everything and that God is the source of all truth and wisdom, he will impart truth to us. If we recognize that we are fools if left to ourselves, after all we are sinners, he will instruct us.

Put another way, the people God will instruct are those who fear him (25:12). Fear for God's children is reverence and awe for God without fear of his rejection. But we should tremble at the thought of hardening our heart to God and receiving his discipline. After all, David himself faced earthly judgments for his casual approach to God with Bathsheba (e.g., his son conceived by sin died shortly after birth). So if we fear God, we respect and honor him because of who he is and we don't treat sin casually. Those who fear "Him will he [God]

instruct in the way that he should choose (25:12).” In other words, if we fear God, he will show us which paths we should choose.

Application

What does this tell us? Well, we should be learning when God forces us to wait. Trials are the perfect time to gain understanding and acquire wisdom. And during trials we need divine guidance to make wise choices. We need God to show us the way we should go.

How can we practically do this? A good thing to do every time before you read Scripture is begin with prayer. Pray 25:4-5 verbatim. OR paraphrase its intent. This is what I do. Make this prayer the beginning of your devotions. Invoke God to teach you before you open his word. Another way God mercifully provides for us during trials is by providing us with wisdom.

Waiting 3: Wait by recalling who God is (25:6-10)

Explanation

When David calls out to God for deliverance, he rehearses God’s character:

- God is merciful (25:6) = tender mercy or compassion for those in distress
- God’s love is steadfast (25:6) = God is committed to us in a relationship that he freely entered out of kindness and not obligation, and now that we are God’s children, he has obligated himself to us because of his pledged commitment to us... this love springs from God’s nature and results in kind actions towards us = nothing can separate us from God’s love (Rom 8:35-39)
- God is good (25:7) = moral goodness implying kindness or benevolence and this is why God forgives and instructs sinners
- God is upright (25:8) = God is ethically blameless in his dealings with men
- God is faithful (25:10) = dependability, reliability

What’s the point? Who God reveals himself to be for us in Scripture should inform our prayers.

Application

Relate to God as he truly is. The opposite is idolatry: we invent a god for ourselves to suit our own desires, and even our sin. So our conception of God must be rooted in his word, not in human logic, not in cultural assumptions, and not in our own whims. So when you pray, relate to God on the basis of what you find in the Bible.

As far as David goes, he recalled who God is and this moved him to pray with expectation for God to act.

Personal:

What I do: recall God’s character → consider how he deals with me → recall God’s promises → consider the ways in which he has pledged commitment to me → recall how he has dealt with me as a rebellious sinner (each testimony is different) → how he has blessed me (e.g., wife, etc.) → share my pressing struggle → appeal to him as the basis of who he is and how he has pledged himself to me → call on him to act & pray for strength as I wait for him to act (we can’t force his hand!)

Another way God mercifully provides for us during trials is by revealing his nature to us.

Point 4: Wait by confessing your sins (25:7, 11, 18)

Explanation

Whatever David's exact circumstance, his was grieved by his sins:

- “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions” (25:7)
- “For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.” (25:11)
- “Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins. (25:18)

Despite his preoccupation with enemy threats and potential shame, David didn't forget to attend to his heart.

During trial David related to God as one in need of deliverance and forgiveness.

Application

David was already a believer, but he continued to confess his sins. In order that our hearts don't become hardened towards God (David became hardened when he sinned with Bathsheba and remained unrepentant for a season), our regular times of prayer should include confessing our sins. This is a basic and necessary spiritual discipline.

When we find ourselves in a situation where we find ourselves threatened, when we find ourselves waiting for God to act, confession of sin is altogether appropriate. Stretched by agonizing trials that linger on we find ourselves needing God desperately. We need his intervention. We need his wisdom. We need reminders of his character. And since we are closely connected to God, we are all the more aware of our sins. So, when experiencing prolonged trials, don't just ask for help. Remember to keep short accounts with God. Confess your sins and protect yourself from a hardened heart.

David confessed his sins because he knew God is merciful and God desires our growth in Christlikeness. He wants to help us fight against sin. This is why he instructs sinners in his way. So confess your sins in your regular times of prayer.

When we stumble and sin, whether it's the cause of our trials or a response during trials, God mercifully provides us with opportunity to confess our sins to him. If we've come to Jesus in faith we can rest in this: all our sins (past, present, and future) are covered because Jesus took the punishment we deserve.

Point 5: Wait by walking in integrity (25:21)

Explanation

Integrity speaks of a positive moral **completeness** that falls short of sinless perfection. It's a holistic Christian life. God's instruction informs everything we do. When combined with uprightness (ethical manner of life), 25:21 speaks of living in such a way that we are not lacking in character and living ethically. Our whole life is shaped by God's truth rather than applying only bits and pieces of the Bible to our lives. For example, it's the person whose word is trustworthy, does good work at their job, practices sexual purity, cares for the needs of others, makes wise choices, and is a good steward of the resources and abilities God has given to them. It's the person whose whole life is shaped by God's word.

So David, aware of his sins, asks God to grant him integrity and uprightness. In other words, David asks God for empowering grace to help him overcome the sins he's confessed. Divine assistance is needed to overcome sin. Why the desire for empowering grace? So that he will be preserved (= protect, guard, keep). And on what basis does David appeal for empowering grace? Because (“for”) he waits expectantly on God for deliverance.

So David asks God to supply him with empowering grace for his preservation because he trusts in God as his salvation from treacherous enemies.

What will David's integrity and uprightness preserve him from? It can't be his enemies. How would an improvement in his character bring about the defeat of his enemies? David must be asking God to protect him from engaging in sin. After all, we've previously seen that David is grieved because of his sins (25:7, 11, 18). What does this say about our struggle with sin? We need God to enable us to do what he commands. We need his help in our fight against sin.

Application

How should we think about this? First, the presence of unsettling circumstances does not drive David away from God. No, this threat drives him to seek integrity and uprightness. Some conclude that if bad things are happening, God must not be good. God must not care. That sort of response is the opposite of faith. And that isn't how David responded. Instead of concluding God isn't good or God doesn't care and giving up and saying why bother, David instructs us to continue living for God as we wait. In fact, he instructs us to desire growth while we wait. External threats should drive us to seek God. And as we grow in relationship with him, integrity becomes precious to us. We long to live for him!

Second, there's a sense in which our integrity always protects us: if we live with integrity, we will be protected from the painful consequences sin brings into our lives. Another way God mercifully provides for us during trials is by supplying empowering grace that enables us to live with integrity and uprightness.

Conclusion

Whatever the exact circumstance, God did deliver David since David died in peace. So God saw and acted for David. But it wasn't easy during the trial. **At times God calls us to wait for him to act.** How should we respond during these seasons of waiting? **Wait by calling on God with confidence.** Plead for help while enduring with trust. **Wait by seeking God for wisdom.** Seek God's guidance during the trial. **Wait by recalling who God is.** Remember who God is for you. **Wait by confessing your sins.** Beware of hardening your heart. **Wait by walking in integrity.** Run to God, not away from him. God acts for us in our trials: he hears, he gives wisdom, he reveals his character, he extends forgiveness, and he empowers us to live with integrity. So wait by turning to God and trusting him to act for you.