

Why God Waits

by Alan Martin

God desires to turn us from our sinful ways and bring us into a place of humility and obedience, but we must be willing to submit to His will and resist the temptation to resist His attempts to change us.

Scripture: Ezekiel 18:30, Matthew 6:33, Luke 15:1, James 4:7

Topics: "Waiting On God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of submitting to God and resisting the devil. He emphasizes the need to draw near to God and allow Him to draw near to us. The preacher also highlights the significance of training children to submit to God's will and the role of discipline in turning them from the wrong path. He reminds the audience that God's rebuke is meant to bring about repentance and that God takes no pleasure in the downfall of the wicked. The sermon references passages from James and Mark to support these teachings.

Transcript

If it does not produce in us the ability to love others, as God in Christ has loved us, you need to go back to the basis and get saved again. Knowledge puffs up and love edifies. And not one of us know anything except by the grace of God.

And if we receive the grace of God, we are to receive that grace so we may minister that grace unto others in the same way that the Lord ministered that grace unto us. And how did God demonstrate His love for us? Can someone quote that? Yes, but God demonstrates His love for us in this, in that when, while we were yet sinners. Hear that? While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And it says if we are to be perfect like our Heavenly Father is perfect, He is kind to the wicked and the ungrateful. He is kind to both the wicked and the ungrateful. And I've been slow to learn this, but as I'm learning this, even as our Lord Jesus said, that you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples.

Then you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. And there's more truth that we can be set free from. Let's ask the Lord to be with us in that as we seek by faith corporately to experience and receive the implanted Word which is able to save your souls.

The Lord, through the ministry of preaching and teaching, desires to impart life and knowledge and understanding to us. Not the only means. It is a means of grace.

It is a gift of grace. That part that goes along with your personal communion with the Lord. But let's seek to experience the grace of teaching.

By faith, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Let's spend some time acknowledging the Lord that this is not possible apart from the help of His Holy Spirit. Father, You know all things.

You have always had a desire to be known. And You've made all things possible to be known. To every person here in this room, You were faithful every day this week.

At every temptation, You provided a way of escape. You protected each one of us. Not one of us here were tempted this week above what we were able to bear.

You're that faithful. Every day this week, it was upon Your heart to reveal Yourself to us. To communicate with us.

To commune with us. To lead us by Your Spirit. To supply every bit of grace that we needed with extra.

Your grace was there for us to respond as husbands in a loving and understanding way to our wives in every situation. Your grace and understanding and perfect mercy and kindness was there for every wife to be loving and understanding towards her husband. Your grace was there to parents to be kind and merciful and understanding and full of self-control towards their children in every situation.

And You know how we did in that. You know where we are at in that process. You know how much of that grace we're either abounding in or how far short we're still falling.

But according to Your mercy and according to the loving kindness that You have shown Yourself to be, we approach You corporately. And we ask You to help us. This place is filled with children, Father, and You know it.

You're able to speak in a room filled with children. You're able to speak when there's distractions in our mind. Would, by Your grace, Father, would You help those that are distracted in their minds to hear Your Word so that Your Word can effectually work in the believing ones and that faith might come to those that want to hear.

Lord, according to Your will, may everyone that has come here this morning hungering and thirsting after righteousness, may they be filled. And according to Your mercy, Father, may everyone who's come here this morning half-hearted, distracted, unprepared, may even they, Lord, receive a portion that would satisfy them, that would awaken in them. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Reading through the Word this week, I was reading in James, and you can turn there if you'd like to, but I don't necessarily intend to just go verse by verse by verse. It's convenient at times, and I know we like that. It helps you to remember those that take notes.

This is in James, the fourth chapter. It wasn't always necessarily so. When Jesus quoted Isaiah, what did He say? Isaiah said.

When Peter quoted the book of Psalms, He just said, and it was written. So we don't necessarily always have to give a chapter and verse. And I like to do so just so that you can verify and follow.

But I may not do that sometimes. It's a distraction to me, honestly. But here in James, the fourth chapter, verse 7, read along with me.

Therefore submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee to you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners.

Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep, and let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourself on the side of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

And I was reading in my Greek Interlinear, trying to pay close attention to what they call the voice of the verbs. There's three voices in a verb. There's the active voice, which the person you're being said to act upon.

Then there's the middle voice, stressing the involvement of the person being spoken to to accomplish the desired result. And there's the passive voice. And I noticed a switch right in the middle of this verse that caught my attention that I just want to share with you, that's what's on my heart to share with you.

So follow me in verse 8 again. I'm going to go from 8 on. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, that's active command, you sinners. Purify your hearts, that's an active command. You double-minded.

Lament and mourn and weep. All those are active commands. And then do you notice in your Bible how it changes in verse 9? It changes voice.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning. Let your joy be turned to gloom. And then in verse 10, it's also a passive.

Your versions will likely say humble yourselves. But it's actually passive in the original text, and it says be humbled before the Lord, and He will exalt you. What's the difference there? What am I getting at? Does anyone here already pick up what I'm getting at? You don't have to volunteer.

It's okay. Just think about it though. Here's what I'm getting at.

There are things the Lord asks us to do, but would we do them of our own accord? Would we? Would you? Would you do them were you not asked? He's asking you, and this is the key, He's asking you to allow your joy and your laughter at times to be changed. He's asking you to allow yourself to be humbled. Do you know why? Not one of you would do it on your own.

When you think you're right in an area, that's how you're going to live in that area. That's the way men live. There is a way that seems right to a man.

But the end thereof are the ways of death. And God in His mercy comes along and in our own thought processes, by what we think is right by His Word, by His Holy Spirit, it may be through a messenger, it may be through a preacher, it may be through a close friend, He brings some means alongside to seek to turn you. He seeks to change you.

And here's where you have the opportunity. You have the opportunity to allow yourself to be changed. What would be changed look like? That would be yielding, submitting, hearing.

What's the Greek word for obedience? Some of you know the Greek word for obedience. What is it? To hear? Under. To submit yourself.

Well, what is it when God is coming to us and seeking to change us, to turn us, to humble us, and how would we choose not to do so? What would we call choosing not to do so? Disobedience. What's the word? How would we have to disobey? We would have to do what? Pardon is right. Turn away is right.

But what happens first when He comes and He's seeking to turn you? What do you have to do? You have to resist. You have to resist His attempts to turn you. These are new things I'm learning.

I'm grateful that there's many other men that have already known these things. I'm only confessing my own ignorance of being slow to learn these things. Did you realize that all manner of sin and blasphemy were going to be forgiven men? All manner.

God forgives homosexuals, adulterers, murderers, rapists, thieves, cheats. He's willing to forgive all except one thing. Resistance to being changed.

Now think about that. There's one thing He will not forgive. Refusal to be humbled.

Refusal to turn. Refusal to be changed. Because in effect, what is a person who is refusing to be changed saying to God? I reject Your authority.

I disagree with Your law. And I choose to continue in my own way. The Lord had a term for that in Israel.

Yes, it actually is. But He used another term. This is the term that describes the resistance.

And He used it as a term for people who would have been very familiar with how to guide an animal. You'd have a horse. You'd put a bridle on a horse.

And when you want the horse to go right, you pull the rein. Because what are you wanting to do? You're wanting his head to turn. You know he's going to follow his head.

But if the horse doesn't want to go right, what must he do? He must stiffen his neck. He must say, and we do that. We do that.

The Lord says, do not be angry. Man's anger does not bring about the righteousness of God. And every time you're tempted to be angry, you see, every time you're tempted to be angry, the way of escape is right there.

God in a gentle way. You're feeling all stirred up inside. And all it is, is just a little gentle nudge.

And you know what you have to do to be angry? Brother and sister, every time you get angry, here's what you have to do to that. It's a choice. You never do so because you were tempted above what you were able to bear.

Never! Or else you've just made God a liar. You do it because you're stiffening your neck at His attempt to turn you out of that way. Our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted at all points like we are.

And what? Without sin. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest. And we have, by His grace, His very nature living inside of us.

That through partaking of His very nature, we can walk in the way He walks. Do you see what God is after you to do? Now let's see if this makes sense. If you want to turn there, I'm going to go to Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12. Verse 3. Read with me. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Does God want any of us weary and discouraged in our souls? No, He does not. That's probably sin number one for many of us. I can't help it.

I'm discouraged. Don't get on to me. Don't tell me I'm sinned.

I'm discouraged. I'm discouraged. That's sin number one.

Repent of that first. Don't stiffen your neck. God doesn't want us discouraged.

Do we have really any reason? We sing this song. We sang it this morning. No, we didn't sing it.

We played it in the operatory. What did we play in the operatory? What a friend we have in Jesus. It's one thing.

I mean, Brother Allen should not sit up here and say you should never be discouraged. But it's okay if we sing, we should never be discouraged. Because we don't think about what we're saying.

The hymn writer knew what he was talking about. We should never be discouraged. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Whenever you face trials of many kinds, consider it pure joy. In everything... in all the good things... No, in everything good things. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus.

And what happens is when our normal, carnal, fleshly, immature, unfinished spiritual life is doing things and going the wrong way and we are not following those nudges of the Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us, God as a loving Father provides something for us. And what does He provide for us in this passage here? Well, let's look at verse 4 and keep going. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

And you've forgotten that exhortation which speaks to you as sons. My son, do not despise the... what? Chastening. Now why is a father trying to chasten his son? In the light of what we're talking about.

What's the answer? Exactly! Why are you chasing your children when they want to run out into the street without looking? Aren't you seeking to turn them? And aren't you quite willing to use whatever means is necessary to get the point across? And whatever means when you are trying to train your children, this is ultimately what you're trying to train them to do. You are trying to train them to allow themselves to be turned. To yield.

To submit. To hear under. That's it, parents.

Train up a child in the way he should go. You know how he should go? He should learn to yield. He should learn to submit.

He should go in the way where he can be turned. Where God, by His Spirit and His Word, can steer that young man or young woman any way He wants that person to go. That's how you're to raise your children.

And when you raise them up in that way, when they learn that the way they should go is to yield to God in everything, when they're old, they won't depart. But what if they don't learn to yield because you, unlike a loving God and a perfect God, have spared the rod? What's the rod for? Discipline. For punishment.

Why? Is it out of anger? It's out of love. It's to turn someone from the wrong way. Now, understand what God is after in this passage.

He says, don't despise the chastening of the Lord. Don't be discouraged when He rebukes you, when you're rebuked by Him. What does it mean when you're rebuked by God? He's speaking to you.

He loves you. Do you know what He does when He's fed up trying to turn someone? He gives them over to go their own way. And out of love, He pleads.

You know, it says to take an example of patience, long-suffering, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. And what were they constantly doing? Standing out there, pleading with a group of stubborn, rebellious, stiff-necked people to turn. And you're going to see that in a minute.

Just a little more, so we'll look at Jeremiah's life. Verse 6, for whom the Lord loves, He does what? He chastens us to turn us, to persuade us to humble ourselves. And He scourges everyone whom He receives.

And if you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But ye are without chastening. And to King James, it's not a very nice word there.

You're illegitimate. Of which all have become partakers, and you are illegitimate sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we respected them for it.

Now verse 11. Well, verse 10 and 2. For they indeed for a few days chastened us, as seemeth best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seemeth to be joyful for the present, but painful nevertheless.

Afterward it yieldeth what? The peaceable fruit of righteousness. You know why it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness? What's a righteous thing with God? You know what the one thing God considers righteous? Doing what He says. Now follow that.

Do you sympathize? That's what He considers righteous. We know that because 1 John says this. Little children, let no one deceive you.

He who does what is righteous is righteous. Just as He is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

And the reason the Son of God appeared... So this is righteousness. When you allow God to come through His Word and turn you and you humble yourself, it produces righteousness. And you know what else it produces? Peace.

Why does it produce peace? The same reason there's different types of horses out there. Some horses are a joy to ride. How fun is it when you get one of those... You want to go this way, but he just constantly... Constantly wants to go back to the barn.

Constantly wants to go this way. Tell me how much peace you can have with God when you're constantly pulling against His chastening. It's not possible.

When you've learned that all He is after is to turn you in the way that's best, and you learn to... It produces what He's after. His will. You know, what's this called? It's two things rubbing against each other.

What's this called? Unity. Oneness. One produces... Well, they're both kind of warm, but one will be an irritation and one will be a blessing.

You realize, as I'm beginning to realize, that God did not judge Israel. He didn't judge them for idols. He didn't judge them for breaking the seventh.

He didn't judge them for being fornicators and adulterers and liars and thieves. He judged them for something else. What did He judge them for then if He didn't judge them for those things? This is Scripture.

You better test all things with the Word. I see some puzzled looks out there. Why did He judge them for if He didn't judge them for this? He judged them for refusing correction.

Look with me in Jeremiah 3. Find verse 6 and let's read together. Jeremiah 3. I'm going to read on from verse 6. During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me, have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She's gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to Me.

But she did not. So what is the actor? What's the actor? Her returning. Okay, now follow that.

But she did not. And her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries.

Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear. She also went out and committed adultery because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her. And she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood.

In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart. What's the actor? The actor is returning to Him with all of her heart, but only in pretense, declares the Lord. The Lord said to me, faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah.

What would that be? Now how could God say that? Because one was actually truer to their heart. One said, we don't want you, and that's the way we're going to walk. One said, we don't want you, but came in pretense and only pretended to one.

Didn't Jesus say Himself, I would that ye be either hot or cold, but because you're lukewarm, I'm about to spew you out of My mouth. Same sense here. Verse 12, I'm going to proclaim this message toward the north.

Return, faithless Israel, declares the Lord, and I will reprove on you no longer, for I am merciful, declares the Lord. I will not be angry forever. Only do what? Acknowledge your guilt.

Is He saying to them, to this adulterous, unfaithful person who committed adultery, whom He sent a certificate of divorce and put her away, is He saying, all you have to do is return to Me, acknowledge your

guilt, and I'll wipe it all out. Is He? Absolutely yes, He is. So ultimately, what is the judgment then going to be on? Refusing to do even that.

Refusing to return and humble their heart. Now, let's see. Every scripture needs to be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Every matter does. Turn to Ezekiel 18. Toward the end of the chapter, find verse 30.

Ezekiel 18.30 Read with me. Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent, turn away from all your offenses, and then what? What does it say there? The NIV says, then sin will not be your downfall.

God won't judge you for being unfaithful. God won't judge you for what you were. He's saying, if you turn to Me, then the sin you've been committing, the way you've been living, it won't be your downfall.

Instead, rid yourselves of all the offenses you've committed. Get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death And if anyone declares the Lord, repent and live.

Now how does this really apply to you and I in two ways? Do you understand what a message of hope this is for us? I really don't care. And neither does God. God sees it all accurately.

If any of you has been involved in any kind of pornography, it doesn't have to be your downfall. If any of you cheated or lied or stolen, if you've not yet repented of anger and discouragement and defeat and unbelief, it doesn't have to be your downfall. God only wants one thing of you.

Allow yourself to be humbled. Allow yourself to be turned. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

He delights to be merciful. And be sober though. Keith said it earlier, and I want you to look there with me in the passage.

Mark 3, I believe. Mark 3, verse 39, I believe. Let me get there and see if that's where it is.

Is it 29? Check 29. Let's see. Is that it? Yeah, let's read verses 28 and 29 together.

As surely I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men. Isn't that incredible? Rapists, murderers, cheats, swindlers, liars, witches, homosexuals, lesbians, it will all be forgiven except one thing. There's one thing that will not be forgiven.

It's when the Holy Spirit comes through His Word, through a messenger, through another means, to turn a sinner from the error of his way, and that sinner chooses to speak against the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it will never be forgiven. What do you do? What else can God do when out of His love and mercy He sends His Spirit through His Word, through a man, through other situations, to turn someone from the error of their way, and they speak against it and refuse to hear? What does He have left to reach them by? Nothing. He has no plan B. Those who refuse to be humbled, what does He do? What does God do to those who refuse to be humbled? It says in the Scripture, it says, He does what to the proud? He resists.

In the Greek, it's anti, against, and tomao, to order and arrange. It was used of a military term. He dresses Himself in His battle garments to fight against those who refuse to be submitted to His law and His way.

And He's not judging them for their former life. He's not judging them for their ignorance. He's not judging them for their homosexuality, or their lesbianism, and all those things.

He's going to judge them for one thing, refusing His mercy, refusing His grace, refusing His goodness, and choosing their own way instead. And He is just to do so. We don't want those people in heaven.

We've already seen the earth corrupted enough by people who resist His will. But when we allow ourselves to be humbled, guess what we receive? Grace is given. And there's only one other word of warning for people like myself.

This is my own confession. For any of you that are out there that are too much like me, I'm still seeking repentance from an area. And if you want to see that, turn to Luke 15 and see how this works out.

This is for me and all those like me. The very first of the chapter. And Luke 15 is a chapter that has three parables.

A parable of the lost sheep, a parable of the lost coin, and a parable of the ungrateful brother. And they all speak to this issue. Chapter 15, verse 1. And all the tax collectors and all the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.

And the Pharisees and scribes, and who are they going to be? Who are the Pharisees and scribes? What does the word Pharisee mean? The set-apart one. And of course, who are the scribes? Those completely dedicated to the Word of God. So all the set-apart ones and those totally dedicated to the Word of God, they had a problem with Him receiving sinners and tax collectors.

And they were grumbling, the Pharisees and scribes, saying, this man does what? The word is prosdechami. He welcomes sinners. He welcomes them.

He lets them come to Him. They had a problem with that. And He tells them three parables to speak to this.

And the one I want to look at, the one that pertains most to me, is in the last parable. Most of you call it the parable of the prodigal son. Well, I'd like you to change it in your mind to the parable of the Pharisical brother.

The point of the parable was to speak to the Pharisee's heart. So you get the parable. You already know the parable well.

Okay? When the young man came to himself, look, verse 20. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had what? Had compassion on him.

The mercies of God are new every morning and his compassions fail not. Do you know what the Scripture says? He will by no means cast out those who come to God by faith to Him. God is not going to cast out people who humble themselves and draw near to Him.

And this father saw his son far off and ran to him. And you know the story. But in verse 25, verse 25, Now his older son was in the field and he came and drew near to the house and he heard music and dancing.

And so he called one of his servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, Your brother has come, because he's received him safe and sound, and your father has a fatted calf. Now, the word

that most troubled the older brother was what in verse 27? Hmm? He received him.

What? He received the five fathers? Don't you know what he did? He squandered all your money. He's made a mess of your name. He's blasphemed your... Yeah.

We're talking about a perfect father here. Because what happens? He said to him, Your brother has come and because he has received him safe, your father has killed the fatted calf. But he was angry and would not go in.

And what does a loving father do who's perfect in love? What does a father do? He comes out pleased with him. Isn't that precious? He doesn't say, Back with you. You don't understand what I'm doing.

No, he comes out even pleased with the Pharisee. You see what Jesus is saying? Come on, set apart ones. Join Me.

Understand what I'm doing. See what I'm about. I'm not out.

I didn't come to judge the world. I didn't come to bring judgment. I came to seek and save that which is lost.

I'm willing to receive them. I'm willing to forgive them. I'm willing to blot out all their transgressions for not My name's sake.

I'm willing to pay the one who came at the last hour the same as everyone else. He pleaded with the older brother to come in and join the celebration. But the older brother had difficulty with the father being willing to forgive someone that lived that way.

Can I say something to all of us? Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who's not been merciful. Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who's not been merciful. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, then your Heavenly Father shall forgive yours.

And if ye do not forgive men their trespasses... Now, does it say against you? What if you just don't forgive men their trespasses? What if you just won't come in when God is welcoming sinners in? What if you don't think the way of God is to just welcome these unfinished, immature, carnal people and think to make them saints? What if you just don't like that and you just want to stay away because you want to keep yourselves separated? Are you really being like the Father? That's a warning to me. Because it's taken me too long to realize God's not judging men for their sin. The sins, plural.

God judges men for one thing. Refusing to receive His mercy and come back to Him. That's the judgment.

That's the judgment that sends men to Hell. Because God is willing to forgive all manner of sin and blaspheming among men. So let's don't be guilty of either.

Let's don't be guilty of refusing to turn when God, out of His love, is seeking to turn us. This is what He said of Israel. Israel is a stubborn heifer.

How then can the Lord pasture her like sheep in a meadow? You see his heart? He wanted to pasture them, but they're stubborn. Don't be that. And don't be like a separated one who loves the law and is not willing to see God glorify Himself by just forgiving all manner of sins to men.

Let's don't fall into either trap. Let's pray. Thank You for Your Word, Father.

In every way where I myself might have been inadequate, have mercy upon me. Lord, I ask You to continue to help me control the passion that lives within me that just so rises up within me. I want to walk.

I want to be one this week, Father. And I know there are others here right now. I know the cry of their hearts.

Together we would say, we want to be led by Your Spirit this week, Father. We want to yield when Your Word comes to us. We want a broken and a contrite heart that does not resist Your discipline or resent it, but submits ourselves to it.

We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen. May the Lord do this work among us. Okay.

You're dismissed.

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