



Following Jesus: What Is God Waiting for?

2 Peter 3:8-15a
October 28, 2018

Do you enjoy waiting? How about waiting at the DMV? Yeah, that's fun! About as fun as waiting in the lines at an amusement park or during Black Friday shopping. It's not much fun waiting to use the restroom, or waiting in the checkout line at the grocery store, especially with 3-4 young children who are all tired and hungry. How about waiting on the phone with customer service. Or, here's a crazy one! There is a place that actually spends millions of dollars just to build rooms, which are specifically designed for people to do one thing: wait! They actually title these rooms "WAITING Rooms." I'm talking, of course, about hospital waiting rooms. I seriously doubt that there are very many of us who sincerely enjoy waiting for things in life. Especially in today's fast-paced world. We are a right NOW culture. Whether it be microwaving our meals or sending and receiving our Snap Chats. We expect things to happen almost immediately. Do you know who is REALLY good at waiting though? God. And that's one of the most amazing things about Him. In fact, it's so amazing, that it's a key concept in this morning's message. Please turn in your Bible to 2 Peter 3:9.

1. What is God waiting for? Last week we talked about heaven and the hope of eternity. We went through some of the great things about heaven, which we get to enjoy AFTER the Final Day. It's been a full week now since last Sunday, but that Final Day STILL hasn't come. Doesn't God know how much we HATE waiting?¹ 2 Peter 3:9 says, "**The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you**, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." As I mentioned last Sunday, it may seem to us like the Lord is slow. God has so many amazing characteristics like perfect foreknowledge, holiness, grace, and love. But, as amazing as those other characteristics are, let's give God glory today, for His amazing patience!

God's patience is renowned all throughout Scripture. "[Patience] is part of [God's] self-revelation as early as Exodus 34:6,² 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness....'"³ Even during the final judgment in Revelation, God's patience seems to be holding back for just a little while longer, in the hope that just a few more people might still repent.⁴ We see this, in the sadness of the repeated lament, when, instead of repenting, people kept on sinning and refused to turn to God.⁵ Revelation 9:20 tells us, "The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent...."⁶ Jonah actually complains about how slow God is in Jonah 4:3, "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."⁷ Aren't you glad to know that God is so slow? Meaning, He is SO patient! We read later in 2 Peter 3:15, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation."⁸

God waited for you to come to repentance. He waited for me to put my trust in Jesus. Even now, STILL today, he is waiting for others to come to Him. The fact that God is waiting is a wonderful thing! But, there may be times when we still find ourselves thinking: "Who else is God Waiting For?" Can't He see that no one else is really interested in following Him? How many more can there really be left? But let's stop right here and examine an assumption we may be making.

2. WHO is God waiting for? Let's turn back to 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with **you**, not wanting anyone to perish,

¹ Perhaps God is being a good Heavenly Father by trying to teach us patience. I tell people all the time, don't pray for patience, because the way God teaches us patience seems to be by putting us in situations where our patience gets tested. And that's not much fun! 😊

² Moses calls upon this characteristic when he asks God to forgive Israel. He declares in Numbers 14:18, "The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion."

³ Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 279). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

⁴ See also Joel 2:12-14 and Romans 2:4.

⁵ Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 280). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

⁶ See also the painful details in Revelation 9:21 and 16:9-11.

⁷ Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 279). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

⁸ The *ESV* does a better job of revealing how the original Greek connects 2 Peter 3:15, "And **count** the patience of our Lord as salvation..." with 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some **count** slowness..." The connection is through the word "count," which translated from the same Greek word, "ἡγέομαι." (See Thomas R. Schreiner's discussion on page 394 of his commentary: *1, 2 Peter, Jude: The New American Commentary, Vol. 37*, B&H, Nashville, TN, 2003.

but everyone to come to repentance.”⁹ WHO exactly, is God waiting patiently for? In other words, who is Peter referring to when he says “YOU?” I’ve always assumed that this “you” is a “generic you,” referring to anyone who is still spiritually lost and unsaved.¹⁰ But what if Peter actually meant someone else? Or, at least, what if Peter meant someone more? Peter refers to them as “dear friends,”¹¹ throughout chapter 3, which would indicate that he is primarily writing to his brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, Peter is not so much writing his letter to the spiritually lost but rather to those who are already spiritually found. So, what if the “YOU” in verse 9, is actually referring to Christ-followers?

With this in mind, let’s look at 2 Peter 3:9 once more, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead **he is patient with you (Christ-followers)**, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Perhaps, part of what Peter is saying here, is that God’s patience is not only toward the unsaved, who have not yet come to repentance, but also toward the saved, those of us who have not yet finished reaching out to those who are perishing. In other words, God doesn’t want anyone to perish, therefore He is being patient: patient with those of us who are Following Jesus. He is giving us time to witness, time to urge everyone come to repentance. Therefore, perhaps when God hears us, down here on earth, saying “What is GOD Waiting For?” He is up in heaven thinking...

3. What are YOU waiting for? This is the real question we should be asking this morning. In other words, God is waiting for more people to come to repentance, which means he is waiting for us to share Christ with them, even if it takes another 1,000 years! Back in verse 2, Peter said that he wanted his readers to recall what the other apostles had taught them. In fact, later in verse 15, Peter specifically refers to things that the Apostle Paul had written. This would include each Christ-follower’s incredible purpose statement in 2 Corinthians 5:14-20,¹² “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who **reconciled** us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of **reconciliation**: that God was **reconciling** the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of **reconciliation**. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be **reconciled** to God.” It’s hard to miss Paul’s point here: he uses some form of the word “reconciliation” 5 times in a row! This ties in nicely with what 2 Peter 3:9 tells us: God doesn’t want anyone to perish; what He wants is for everyone to come to repentance. This is why sharing our faith is so pleasing to God; we are joining Him in accomplishing one of His greatest goals: reconciliation with mankind.

Initially, it kind of bothered me how the letter of 2 Peter ends... or rather, how it DOESN’T end. It seemed to me like Peter missed such a perfect opportunity to call these Christ-followers to evangelism. After all this talk in chapter 3 of heaven and hell, of judgment on the ungodly and of reward for the godly in the new heaven and earth. After all this talk of God’s loving patience and wanting everyone to come to repentance, it seemed odd that Peter didn’t put out a strong clarion¹³ call to fervent evangelism. However, although Peter doesn’t explicitly call his readers to evangelism, I’m becoming increasingly convinced, as I study chapter 3, that he is at least implicitly calling us to evangelism. That’s what made me take a closer look at verse 9.

It also caused me to take a closer look at this sentence which straddles between verses 11-12, “...You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming...” That phrase “**speed its coming**” is a little startling to my theology. Wow, can we really

⁹ “What St. Peter wishes is to contrast the eternity of God with the impatience of human expectation.” Bigg, *Peter and Jude*, p. 295, quoted by Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, *2 Peter, Jude*, Vol. 37 of the *New American Commentary*, B & H, Nashville, TN, 2003.

¹⁰ See Ezekiel 18:23, 32 and also Habakkuk 2:3.

¹¹ He actually calls them this 4 times in 2 Peter 3, in verses 1, 8, 14, and 17.

¹² Arguably, 2 Corinthians was written some 10 years BEFORE 2 Peter.

¹³ Notably a shrill sounding war trumpet. As in “banzai” or “charge!”

move forward the day of Christ's return? I've always thought of that day as a fixed date in the future, a day that only the Heavenly Father knows. This seems to indicate that Christ-followers might somehow be able to speed up the actual time-frame for this. Hum...?¹⁴ One Bible commentator explains that Peter is indeed, "declaring that the coming...of the Day of God is not a fixed date, but that under the sovereignty of God and due to his mercy...it can be sped up (or, conversely, slowed down) by the behavior of the followers of Jesus."¹⁵

The more I reflected on this, the more it began to make sense to me. The main thing that God is waiting for, is for any "not-yet-Christians" to come to repentance. And God already knows who all those people will be. Living a godly life is one way that we give testimony to God's existence and to His goodness. In other words, when we live out a genuine Christian faith, it draws unsaved people near to God.¹⁶ Living holy lives contributes to our evangelistic success. It hastens the day of God¹⁷, so that "When the requisite number of sinners repent...then the end will arrive."¹⁸ While we are waiting for Christ's return, we are called to live holy and godly lives. Our mission is to share Jesus with everyone around us. That's why our church's purpose statement ends with the phrase "enlarging His Kingdom." Some strategies are probably a little more effective than others though. Take one minute to go to your computer and look up the video on YouTube called, "That Awkward Moment When You Try to Share Your Faith (Part 2)." It's at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waVvUis-NLk>

This video illustrates what I'm talking about. It's an unfortunate example of how we sometimes view evangelism. Have you ever bumped into someone like this guy? Ever felt like you were this guy? Evangelism does not have to be awkward or unnatural. In fact, it should be just the opposite. Sharing Christ should be as natural for us as sharing about anything else that is central to our lives. One of my favorite SS classes to teach is called "Becoming a Contagious Christian."¹⁹ It teaches 6 different evangelism styles. Over the years, I've really come to appreciate how we don't all have to be a Franklin Graham, or a Beth Moore, or some other bold and confident speaker up on stage. We can simply share Jesus with people in our everyday lives. And, we SHOULD DO simply that: Be ourselves and share Jesus appropriately with our friends, neighbors, classmates, and co-workers. Here is a quick overview of 6 different evangelism styles:

- 1. The 1st style is Confrontational:** People with this style are typically confident, assertive, and direct in their conversations. If you have this style, you probably already know that this is your style. And, everyone around you probably knows it too. And that's fine actually, this is just the way God has wired you. However, you do need to learn to be careful not to push too hard or too soon. Let God teach you discernment, as far as how and when to give a firm presentation of the gospel.²⁰
- 2. The 2nd style is Intellectual:** People with this style are typically curious, academic, and logical. And, this style is fine, this is just the way that you are wired. But make sure that you remember that your goal is to win people to Christ, NOT just to win arguments about Christ.²¹
- 3. The 3rd style is Testimonial:** People with this style are typically clear communicators, good storytellers, and great listeners. One thing people with this style need to remember though, is that you need to share testimony in such a way, that other people can relate to it, that they can connect it to what's going on in their own lives.²²
- 4. The 4th style is Interpersonal:** If you have this style, you probably have a warm personality and you're easy to be around. You are likely friendship-oriented and you're really comfortable talking at coffee shops or in your living room for hours and hours on end. People with this strength need to

¹⁴ Consider Acts 3:19-20, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, AND that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus."

¹⁵ Davids, P. H. (2006). *The letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (p. 291). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

¹⁶ In contrast, any hypocritical behavior by Christians makes "not-yet-Christians" hesitate to embrace the Christian faith.

¹⁷ At least, from our point of view. With perfect foreknowledge, God would already know all things.

¹⁸ Schreiner, Thomas R., *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude, Vol. 37*, B&H, Nashville, TN, 2003, p. 394.

¹⁹ It's written by Mark Mittelberg, Lee Strobel, and Bill Hybels from Willow Creek with a student edition by Bo Boshers. The resource consulted for this sermon was *Becoming a Contagious Christian: Youth Edition*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2001, especially pp. 20-25.

²⁰ (See 1 Peter 3:15) One biblical example of this might be Peter in Acts 2 when he addresses the crowd of Jews in Jerusalem and tells them right to their faces that they crucified the Messiah.

²¹ One biblical example of this might be Paul in Acts 17 when he is visiting Athens at a meeting with the Areopagus. Paul reasons with these philosophers whom he had met in the marketplace.

²² A biblical example of this is the blind man in John 9:25, who simply says, "...One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see."

remember though, that sometimes the gospel causes friction and discomfort. But, this shouldn't keep us from gently sharing about Jesus nonetheless.²³

5. The 5th style is Invitational: People with this style are includers; they are quick to encourage others to join in. They are often very hospitable and persuasive with all kinds of people.²⁴ One key thing for you to remember is not to assume that just because you got someone to show up, that your part is now done. You should continue, not only to host your guest, but also follow-up with them after an activity, and to look for an opportunity to have an intentional, spiritual conversation with them.

6. The 6th style is Serving: People with this style are focused on others. They are often behind the scenes people who exude humility and patience. You rarely have to ask them twice, to help out with some project or activity. They find genuine joy in simply being a faithful helper. If this describes you, then one thing to keep in mind, is that even though your actions are doing most of the talking for you, there is a time and a place for you to speak up occasionally. In other words, don't let your actions do ALL the talking for you. At times, you will need to muster up the courage, to verbally tell people about Jesus.²⁵

Now, this list is not necessarily comprehensive and some of us may be a hybrid of 2 or 3 of these styles. As I mentioned earlier, what I like about these 6 styles is that they illustrate how we can genuinely be who God made us to be. Sharing our faith should be just a natural part of who we are day by day. Sharing Jesus shouldn't feel fake, contrived, or forced. This is NOT about a surprise attack on someone. (Like you watched on the video.) Let me also point out that there is no one particular style that is necessarily any better than the others. In fact, each style has its place, and it is used in God's plan. Some people won't respond well, to any particular style, except for the one that you happen to have. So, we all need to be partners in this ministry of reconciliation. And, we need to be in it prayerfully. Only God can move in people's hearts, but He chooses to do His work, through the efforts of His people.

Just this month, I heard 3 really encouraging stories regarding evangelism. The first was a report that a young person came to salvation at Camp Shamineau – praise God! The second was a report that a woman came to salvation through one of our Bible studies – praise God! The third encouraging story was most dear to my heart. For many years Debbie and I have been witnessing to a former neighbor. She is very hardened to the gospel. She had some really bad experiences with religion in the past. She also has a major struggle with chemical dependency. We bumped into some of other old neighbors this week, people that we actually helped lead to Christ. They told us a wonderful story about how their son has grown in his faith and how he has lately been eager to evangelize. So now, our former neighbor's, who we watched come to Christ, have a son who has gone over to our other former neighbor's house, to share the gospel with her. How cool is that! She herself has not yet come to faith. But praise God, not only for His patience in waiting for her, but also for the obedience of this young man, in lovingly and boldly sharing the gospel with her!

Can you think of anyone who you would like to see come to Christ? Odds are that that person, has already been on your mind, as you have been reading this message. **My Brother or Sister in Christ, what are YOU waiting for?**²⁶

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²³ A biblical example of this could be Levi the tax collector in Luke 5. He holds a banquet in Jesus' honor and tells all his lost friends to come and meet his new friend Jesus.

²⁴ An example of this from the Bible is the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. She invited her whole town to hear Jesus speak.

²⁵ A biblical example of this could be Tabitha in Acts 9, who was known for always doing good and helping the poor. The Apostle Peter prays for her healing and her godly witness brings many people to salvation.

²⁶ October 8 of this year was a cold Monday morning. The reason that I remember what the weather was like is because that is the day when we were burying the casket of our dear brother in the Lord, Tom Turney. Tom loved to tell people about Jesus. He no longer has that privilege. But, if the Lord had given Tom a few more months or years, I know he would have kept sharing his faith. As much as he longed to see his dear departed wife Alma, Tom also longed to see people come to know Jesus. As eager as we may be for the Lord's return, for the joy of dwelling with God in heaven, WHILE we are waiting, let's be just as eager to share heaven with as many others as we possibly can!