

John Wright Follette was a man who intimately knew God. He was a gifted Bible teacher and author, who had both perspective and spiritual depth in his interpretation of the Word. He was an illuminated spirit in the field of spiritual reality, and had an unusual ability to impart "spirit and life" into those who sat under his ministry.

This gifted Huguenot poet, and deeply spiritual teacher, who lived in New Paltz, New York traced his ancestry back to those unconquerable people whose descendants made history, and who arrived in the area of his birth in the 1660's.

He received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1913 while a student at a Bible School in Rochester, New York, and later became a teacher there until the school closed. He also taught for many years at Southern California Bible College.

During the later years of his life, he was called into a wider field, ministering in conferences and retreats which took him around the world. He passed into his eternal reward in 1966 at the age of 82.

Waiting upon God
By John Wright Follette

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31

This is a very familiar promise and one which most of us have delighted to repeat as a comfort and means of strength to our tainting hearts. But do we not find the blessings mentioned here uncommon in our lives? I fear the truth too many times is that we run and are weary, we walk and do faint.

Let us look at it again - “They that wait upon the Lord.”

Here we find one condition upon which the four resultant blessings hang. This one condition of waiting upon God is entirely within the reach of all, whatever may be the age, condition or environment. God has made it purposely so that all may come into a realization of His blessings. All may not be able to preach, teach, go as missionaries or enter into public service, but any Christian can wait upon the Lord.

Here is another word of encouragement. The four promised blessings are backed up by the “shall” of Jehovah God. This gives it power and authority. It is not the word or promise of man with the fulfillment dependent upon his frailty; but the Word of God in heaven and as pure as His name and character.

The question then is concerning our part - waiting upon God. This sole condition met; the resultant blessings are sure. Obviously, then, the absence of the blessing proves that either we do not meet the condition or we do not understand its meaning.

We like certain promises of Scripture largely because we feel there is something strong, beautiful, and triumphant in them, but we do not really consider what they mean. What does the Scripture mean by waiting upon God? Everything hinges upon that.

First of all let us rid our minds of one idea common to all of us - waiting upon the Lord never means praying or prayer. To wait, according to Scripture, never means prayer, in the general sense of petition and asking. This does not mean that we are not to pray. Prayer has its own great and unique place in the Christian’s life and I only wish we realized more fully its importance and power, but prayer is not my theme.

As prayer has its distinct place and part in the Christian’s life, so has waiting upon the Lord its place and meaning. May the Holy Spirit help us to find a clearer revelation of its meaning, that, having done our praying, we may know how intelligently and in faith to wait upon the Lord. Prayer is precedent to waiting. They are inseparable.

Upon study, I find the Bible tells us much about waiting. It is used seventy-six times in the Old Testament with twenty-five different phases or degrees of meaning and twenty-one times in the New Testament with eight different meanings. These many uses of the word may be divided and grouped under four general divisions, thus giving the word four general meanings. I want to consider these four uses and thus open to our hearts what God means when He says, to wait upon the Lord.

The first meaning of the word is silence - to be silent. That does not sound like prayer or intercession does it? Of course not, for prayer is supposed to have been made and now the soul is hushed and, bowing in silence (in faith) it waits before God. The heart has been poured out, and now lifted upon the wings of prayer the message is wafted up and away through the silent reaches of space to the Father’s throne. And while the Father hears and works, the soul is hushed in silence, waiting.

The Psalmist makes use of this meaning of the word in Psa. 62:1, 5.

“Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my salvation...My soul, wait thou only upon God;

for my expectation is from Him.”

It is as if in some great trial or pressure he had found great comfort in prayer and had encouraged his heart in the hope of God’s help; then in quiet faith casts himself upon God.

This waiting is like a holy benediction, a breath from the life-giving spirit to quiet. It is like the dew of heaven which distills and waters our feverish hearts.

We are living in an age of intense activity. The very atmosphere is charged with a spirit of hurry and rush. This spirit influences our spiritual life in too great a measure and works damage to its development. Our souls are too noisy. In prayer life alone, see how it hinders. Our hearts are much distressed and burdened, so we go to prayer and maybe spend much time pouring out our petitions before the throne. And too many times we get up immediately, rush out of His presence and often try to answer the prayer by some efforts of our own. We do the praying but not the waiting.

Let us not be afraid to be silent before Him thinking it is wasted time. He does not want us to be all the time talking - telling Him so many things about which He already knows more than we do. Time is needed today for proper adjustment to Him, our vision properly focused, our hearts hushed, and minds subdued. This is not all accomplished by prayer. Prayers are needed. They are the winged messengers to carry the need to God. But it is in the silent hour before Him, quietly waiting in His presence that the miracle is wrought.

The second meaning of the word carries the thought of expectation and hope. Twenty-two times we find this use of the word. To wait upon God means to expect from God. A real “waiting meeting” according to Scripture is an expectation meeting. It implies dependence. How necessary today that we wait upon God in the sense of expecting from Him.

The natural man is so self-sufficient. He turns here and there and expects help from his natural ability, from friends or from circumstances. The whole trend of present-day teaching only builds him up in this independence. It has crowded itself into the religious world and today man is taught that he is his own savior, that he need not expect help from any other but his own being.

How contrary to all the teaching of the Word. Quite true that on the natural plane there is occasion for man to help himself and not be dependent. But in the spiritual life we are taught to distrust self and to depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit. As Christians we may have learned this lesson in the initial steps of salvation and may be fully convinced of the need of help from God in that particular.

Are we as thoroughly convinced of the absolute need of expecting from Him everything for the maintenance of that new life? Remember the words of Paul, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” - also the words of Christ, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” Truly we need to expect from God. How patient He is in reducing us. He has His own peculiar methods, but if we will submit to His order, He will reduce, crowd and strip us until with the Psalmist of old we cry, “My expectation is from Him.”

“Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say, on the Lord.”
Psalm 27:14.

Here we find David again pressed and almost discouraged. He refused to expect anything from his own efforts but looking away from the frailty of the natural, with triumphant faith he sings out his heart to God, “All my expectation is from thee.”

The third meaning of wait is to watch, observe, take notice. This means that all our spiritual senses must be alive, alert and expectant. To wait means that we are to be near to Him and still that we may

catch the slightest intimation on His part. Our hearts are to be sensitive enough to catch the faintest reflection and be able to discern quickly His voice.

The meaning is clearly shown in Proverbs 8:34, "Blessed is the man that heareth me; watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors."

"Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waiteth on his master shall be honored." Proverbs 27:18.

Here we have a man, maybe a servant or soldier waiting at a door or gate. He does not know the moment his master may open the door to require his service, or maybe to give him a gift. Be it one or the other it matters not to the waiting man. His duty is to wait (to watch or take notice). It is not the waiting of an idler; it is not the waiting of a dreamer. It is the quiet waiting of one who is girt and ready. We do not long watch or observe keenly the movements of God before He has some word for us. He bids us go or come on some mission, or speak, write, pray, visit, or sing for Him. Why? Because we were near enough to feel what is on His heart, and thus we were able to enter into fellowship with Him in service.

Many today do not understand the movement of God in the world as He is speaking to us in present conditions because they are not near enough or still enough to observe Him. As Christians today our faith is not wrecked because of the conditions about us, nor are we deluded and led into world-wide Church reform movements, because we know what the conditions mean. We have seen and do see God's hand in it all and because of a peculiar and holy response in our hearts we know that God has risen up and that our redemption draweth nigh.

The fourth meaning of wait, is to serve, or minister, and closely follows the third meaning, to watch.

The meaning is clearly taught in 2 Sam. 23: David had many mighty men, but three among them were chief. What special service made them chief? One day when David was being hunted, as he said, "like a partridge, on the mountains of Israel," when he was very far from the throne, and only faith could see him as King, the garrison of the Philistines was in Bethlehem, and he longed and said: "Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" It was not a command, but three men heard the wish breathed out of David's heart, and risking their lives, they broke through the host of Philistines and drew water out of the well by the gate, etc., and fought their way back again and brought the water to David. They were near enough and still enough to hear David's sigh, and that sigh was to them a command.

Such wonderful blessings hang upon this one condition - to wait. Do we wait? Are we silent unto God? Is our expectation from Him or from ourselves, friends or circumstances? Do we watch for His movements that we may serve?

Shall we gather up the meanings of this word wait, and weave them into a Scriptural definition? To wait upon God is to have the heart hushed or silent in an expectant attitude, to hear what He might say that we might do His bidding.

Now let us consider the four resultant blessings which must follow because God says so.

First - "They shall renew their strength." This is a very expressive term and most helpful. To renew strength really means to exchange strength. It is the same term used when speaking of a change of garments. They shall lay aside their strength, and put on, as a garment, strength from God. How suggestive! How needed this is on the part of Christians today. Many feel that they are strong and may boast of it. And so indeed they are in the sphere of the natural, but it is a strength which utterly breaks down in the sphere of the Christian's life. Our great need is to rid ourselves of self-strength that God

may clothe us with His own strength.

And that is the first blessing promised to those who wait upon God. Did you ever notice the whole fortieth chapter of Isaiah is a series of contrasts between the frailty and feebleness of man and the strength and greatness of God?

“All flesh is grass - but the word of our God shall endure forever.”

“It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth - and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.”

While praying over this idea of exchanging strength, I wondered why it should be necessary to exchange so many times. The Lord made me see that it was because of normal growth in the spiritual; just the same as growth in the natural necessitates the changing of garments.

Have we not all noticed a young boy - how he outgrows his clothes so soon and sometimes needs to exchange a suit before it is really worn out? It is not a question of the suit being worn or shabby as much as it is a question of growth.

So in our Christian development, we need many changes of garments (spiritually speaking). Many experiences, blessings and manifestations, which served beautifully at one time in our Christian development utterly come short now. Owing to a deepening in God and greater room being made in our hearts, the demand comes for more of God, an exchange of garments, and a fuller revelation of His Spirit. It is not a sign that we have out-grown God or worn out His blessing - that is foolish. It is a sign that as healthy, normal Christians we are growing and that God desires to re-clothe us with fresh blessings, fresh experiences, fresh touches and manifestations. He is rich; His wardrobe is full. Let us trust Him to clothe us anew.

To many this is not an agreeable thought. They think they must give up or deny some blessing or experience, or go back upon some of His manifestations which have been such a comfort and delight. I am sure God does not want us to deny, forget or belittle any of His blessings; but surely He wants to clothe us with garments convenient and suitable to our age and development. If we are now “grown up sons” or even Fathers and Mothers in Israel, He cannot want us clothed in children’s garments. Nor does He want the young Christian, inexperienced and just coming into the joy of first strength to conform to the dress of an old saint (spiritually speaking). It would be foolish for the young Christian to affect the deportment and life of an old saint when he possesses none of his character. Let God do the clothing. He has you in hand today making an exchange of garments.

Do you feel that some way you are being stripped of former joys, and delightful moods? Are you sensing dryness in some department of your life? Is He revolutionizing your prayer life? Maybe in your service you cannot minister in just the same power as formerly. Does it seem hard to get blessed in just exactly the same way you used to? You are not conscious of any sin or failure and yet you cannot make things go just as you used to make them move. O, friends, just praise the Lord! It is a most wholesome sign. You have outgrown your garment and God is wanting to clothe you afresh.

Here many fail because it entails embarrassment to “stand still” so God can work. They appear backslidden, dried up or cold to those who have no eyes to see, or to less spiritual members. Many cannot get faith and courage enough to stand, so they do what the growing boy does who is conscious of the smallness of his suit. (Spiritually speaking) they begin to pick and to pull at their sleeves to make them “appear longer,” and try to keep the coat (an old experience) snugly buttoned - and it is so uncomfortable. They make a ridiculous spectacle (but sad one) to those who discern the situation.

Do not try to stretch an experience or blessing which is not suited to cover you in your present stage of growth. Tell it to the Lord and “stand still” until He can effect a change.

In Psalm 25:5 the word wait literally means “stand still.” It is so needed on our part if we are to exchange our strength. Have you ever tried to dress a little child? Mothers know what it means. How many times during the act of dressing, do you have to say, “stand still, stand still”? God has as much trouble with His children when He so desires to clothe us in the beautiful garments of the Spirit.

Now let us consider the second blessing promised. It is but a logical result of waiting upon God and exchanging strength - “they shall mount up with wings as eagles.”

I believe the Lord purposely uses the eagle as a type here because of the special peculiarities of that bird.

One summer while in Yellowstone National Park, I had occasion to study or observe some eagles in their natural habitat - and thereby learned some helpful lessons. I think He speaks of an eagle because it is the only bird which goes high enough and sustains its position. They have been known to fly at an height of 6,000 feet. The lark also may reach the upper heights and pour out its songs, but it does not stay so long in the heavens. God seats us “together with Christ in heavenly places.” That is where He sees us in our new-creation life and where He has called us to live. We are heaven-born and now our affections are on things above.

Let us trust the Spirit to hold us in our lofty place. While there, our vision of things is vastly different. We see, as does the eagle, with a bird’s-eye-view the complex and trying circumstances and conditions and seeing from His side we are able to note the relation of one thing to another. Our hearts are concerned with the whole, the ultimate end rather than isolated or disjointed details and sections. Thus we are able to move on in faith as we look at matters from God’s side. If we choose we may look with the limited vision of the natural (our judgment comes into play) and ere we know it we are out of faith. Refuse to look at the situation from the earth side. Let us mount up and let our wings sweep the upper air.

The eagle, I found, had to do with big things - mountains, canyons, great depths and immense heights. The sparrow may be contented to chirp and quarrel in the noisy streets. But in the Grand Canyon - one of the most stupendous and alluring spectacles that nature ever spread out for the wonder and delight of mortal eye - is where I found eagles. There is something so majestic and elevating in the nature of an eagle to choose such surroundings as its native haunt.

Truly God has opened to us as Christians a life potent with unmeasured possibilities. The life of a Christian as contrasted with that of the man of the world has to do with the most sublime realities, the most tremendous issues and wonderful destiny. May the Holy Spirit bring us more into a realization of the dignity and wonder of it all. Not to incite pride in the old creation, but humility; that our hearts being subdued and yielded may partake of the nature and character of heavenly and eternal things with which God delights to occupy us. Let God fill our vision with some of the depth, magnitude and mystery of His plan. We would have less time for small talk and non-essentials.

The eagle is not often seen - he is the most solitary of all birds. Many birds are common to sight and even afford amusement. Parrots can talk and entertain, causing remarks and comment. The eagle stays alone. Did you ever hear of a flock of eagles! The noisy geese go in flocks. But who wants to be a goose? God seeks eagle men. No man ever comes into realization of the best things of God, who does not, upon the Godward side of his life, learn to walk alone with God.

Had we time we could trace through the Word the lives of many of God’s eagle men. We find Abraham alone upon the heights, but Lot (a just man and saved) dwelling in Sodom. Moses, skilled in all the wisdom of Egypt, must go forty years into the wilderness alone with God. Paul, who was filled with Greek learning, and had also sat at the feet of Gamalel, must go into Arabia and learn the desert life

with God. Let God isolate us.

In this isolation experience we develop an independence of faith and life so that the soul needs no longer the constant help, prayer, faith or attention of his neighbor. Such assistance and inspiration from the other members are necessary and have their place in the Christian's development, but there comes a time when they act as a direct hindrance to the individual's faith and welfare. God knows how to shape the circumstances in order to give us an isolation experience. We yield to God and He takes us through something, and when it is over, those about us, who are no less loved than before, are no longer depended upon. We realize that He has wrought some change in us and that the wings of our souls have learned to sweep the upper air.

This isolation produces another characteristic mark - quietness. No other bird can keep quiet as long as an eagle. The soul acquires a new grip upon his life and is now moved by God rather than by things seen. He can trust God to control his spirit in the most vexing circumstances. Often quietness (self-possession) and silence will prove a mightier rebuke than words.

We see this majestic calm and quietness so marked in the life of Christ. We also see it in Paul and others who have yielded fully to God. If we mount up with wings as eagles, we shall often grieve the captious, and must count upon some experience of misunderstanding; but we can keep quiet.

Listen to Paul, "a very small thing with me that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." We must avoid this. We may nest low enough to be understood by the natural, get under bondage to people, and be approved; but if we take the upper air we must go alone like the eagle.

Now let us consider the remaining two blessings which come in order as a result of waiting and mounting up:

[Three] "They shall run and not be weary." That seems like a tremendous come-down; like a strange anti-climax, and also,

[Four] "They shall walk and not faint." This is not an anticlimax but rather the logical result of waiting. Man's order would be to walk, run, and then mount up and thus reach the gradual growth of the Christian in power and strength. But here God is telling us something different. He is showing us the purpose of all that has gone before. The end in view is the practical everyday life to be lived in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. We go up there [so] that we may serve down here.

May God teach us by His Spirit the secret of waiting. Then we shall find that unseen hands have clothed us with power and thus our souls will mount up to be alone with God in silent places. Having our strength renewed in flight, we are pleased to walk and run out upon the errands of the Lord. So doing, this everyday life, prosaic, common, and unbeautiful may be made potent with blessing and lived in the power of the Spirit.

