

Donald Whitney

WHEN WAITING IS TRUSTING

JAMES 1:3 AND SELECTED TEXTS

How do you know that you are truly trusting God in relation to a particular matter? Is there ever any sort of evidence to which you can point in order to prove that you have Biblical faith? There are many in our day who would say that the only acceptable evidence of faith is the receiving of that for which you believed God. In fact, there is a popular teaching today which implies that if the answer to your prayers doesn't come rather soon then your faith is defective. Does the Bible teach that the proof of your faith is always found in such "success"? Can you be waiting on God-without an answer to your prayer- but still trusting?

I. THE PROOF OF TRUSTING IS NOT ALWAYS FOUND IN EVIDENT RECEIVING

- A. *There are verses (e.g., Mt. 7:7-8, 21:22) indicating that it's not unusual to receive relatively quick and obvious answers as evidence of faith. Even though more emphasis is needed on trusting God for answers to prayer, we must also emphasize that the amount of our faith isn't always revealed by successfully and quickly getting what we pray for.*
- B. *Abraham and Sarah prayed and trusted God for thirty years regarding a promise from God without much result. Habakkuk believed God would hear his prayer for national revival (Hab. 1:2-4), but when a successful answer didn't come he still had faith (3:17-19). Paul had faith when praying about a disability (2 Cor. 12:7-10) but it remained.*

II. THE PROOF OF TRUSTING IS OFTEN FOUND IN WAITING

- A. *"Count it all joy, my brothers," we're told in Jas. 1:2-3, "when you meet trials of various kinds, knowing that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness ("perseverance" -*

NIV).” *This tells us that our faith is often tested and proven real, not by whether our prayers are answered, but by the perseverance our faith produces.*

- B. *Our tendency is to think of people like George Mueller as the great examples of faith (and it’s good that we do) because of his 50,000 recorded answers to prayer. But think of Abraham again. He is held up in Scripture as the example of faith. How did he prove the reality and greatness of his faith? Was it by always successfully receiving answers to prayer? No, it was by his perseverance in trusting God even after years of unsuccessful prayer (see Rom. 4:19-21).*
- C. *In his day, Job was perhaps the richest man in the world. He trusted God and lived faithfully for Him, and God blessed his faithfulness with prosperity. But the time came when God tested Job’s faith by allowing Satan to take away his family, his possessions, and even his health. In spite of all God had allowed to happen, Job still said (in Job 13:15), “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.” Job is famous for his faith, not because it was rewarded with success, but because it wouldn’t quit.*
- D. *So is it only those people or churches who experience growth and success and God’s evident blessing who have faith? Think of great missionaries like Carey, Judson, and Morrison who each worked and waited in faith for years before seeing one conversion.*

III. MORE APPLICATION

- A. *Sometimes unrewarded faith is due to sin. Ask God to show you if this is so.*
- B. *Because God’s plan of holiness for you involves building faith and perseverance, you will have areas of your life where your faith must be proven by waiting and perseverance.*
- C. *Believe that God is just as faithful when He withdraws as when He gives you visible rewards for your faith.*