

WHILE WE WAIT...WE WORSHIP*



INTRODUCTION

Although the Christmas or Advent season comes at the end of our calendar year, we really are entering a season of new beginnings blended with anticipated endings. Christmas literally means “Christ-worship,” and we joyfully celebrate God’s gift to the world through Christ’s first Advent. However, the Latin word *adventus* is taken from the translation of the Greek word *parousia*, commonly used to refer to the second coming of Christ. Essentially, we live and minister in the “already and not yet” period of His kingdom as we eagerly await His second coming!

Waiting isn’t easy for some of us “type A” personalities. If we are going to have a period of delay, we need something to keep us busy in the meantime. Remember when we used to have to wait for days or even a week to have holiday pictures developed. Then technology became so advanced, we had Polaroid cameras! I recall when my dad bought his first Polaroid. The picture would shoot from the bottom of the camera, and you were supposed to wait so many seconds or minutes (depending on the temperature) before pulling off the layer with the developing chemicals. We would shake the photo in our hand to try and help the process and often peeled the layers apart too soon. Consequently, the image and colors would be distorted. This was especially true in colder temperatures.

Now, we simply click a button on our phone and a picture instantly appears. Recently, via Facetime, our granddaughter shared some exciting news of an award she’d received, and we were able to experience her animation and enthusiasm as if we were sitting in the room with her. Video conferencing often makes business travel practically unnecessary. Waiting in many ways has virtually become a thing of the past unless you are tired of fast food restaurants and want a fine dining experience. Then we get impatient if the server takes longer than ten minutes to bring the entrée after we’ve already enjoyed an appetizer and salad.

In software engineering, “busy-waiting” or “spinning” is a technique in which a process repeatedly checks to see if a condition is true while you wait. When a woman is pregnant, she doesn’t have to repeatedly check to see if the condition is true! Although this is to be the most cherished time in her life, the mother-to-be may become so uncomfortable that she will employ a variety of techniques to induce labor. She is ready and willing to try anything to get things moving on to the next phase of parenting. Most of these methods, though said to be scientifically proven, do not really work. Of course, when you’re waiting for the birth of a baby, you don’t have a lot of choice but to endure and focus on the promise as you anticipate the blessed arrival.

Paul told the Romans we persevere in our Christian life, knowing our hope will not be disappointed because God is continually pouring His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:1–5). The Father knows the day and the hour when Christ will return. We are not dependent upon employing human techniques

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

Romans 5:1–5

 **PERSONAL OR
COVENANT GROUP
INTERACTION**

Take a few moments to write in your prayer journal or share with two or three other group members your response to the following:

1. As twenty-first century believers, what is the church doing while we await the Second Advent of our Redeemer?
2. How do we sometimes get anxious and pull away from the developing process, causing His image to be distorted?
3. Are we willing to settle for fast food menus instead of enjoying fine dining on the Bread of Life? Explain your response.
4. Let's get personal! In what ways have I sometimes found myself doubting my faith, going into a spinning mode, and continually questioning if the conditions of Scripture are true?
5. Complete the following:
Lord, help me to live with an unfading hope regardless of _____

(my personal difficulties).
Despite today's spiritual temperature in the world around me, I will hope and continue to experience Your peace and _____ as I wait and worship.

to rush the process. Our hope transcends this present world and rests in the heavenlies—in the sure Word of God, who is seated at the right hand of the Father awaiting Abba's command. The key to persevering and hoping while we wait is to continue worshipping!

I. THE CYCLE OF HOPE

Hope can be either a noun ("I have hope.") or a verb ("I hope to see you at Christmas."). Interestingly, the actual word "hope" is not found in the Old Testament until the book of Ruth. However, the concept of hope is woven throughout the Bible. When faced with adversities, the **reason** for our hope and peace is revealed in Romans 5:1—being justified by faith or declared righteous in the sight of God. Faith and hope are closely related and sometimes used interchangeably. What are some more results of justification by faith or being in right relationship with God (according to Romans 5)?

✚ **We have peace with God.** The emphasis is on relationship **with** God and peace **from** God will be the result. The present nearness of the Lord and His future return are reasons for us to "not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petitions, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6–7 NIV). Isn't the advent of peace the message of the multitude of heavenly host, who praising God in Luke 2:14 sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (KJV)?

✚ **We have access to God.** This word translated "access" can be used in two ways. It is a common word used for introducing one to royalty, and one that is sometimes used for a harbor where a boat would be docked. Through faith, we have been introduced to Jesus, the Messiah and King, who was to rule on the throne of David forever. He is also our access into the harbor of God's grace when life's storms would try to shipwreck our hope. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness that give us access to the King of kings and Lord of lords while we wait!

✚ **We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.** This isn't to be confused with wishful thinking such as "I hope someone gives me a new BMW for Christmas." This is a confident expectation, an absolute assurance, that what we hope for will come. It is the absolute confidence that we shall see the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory, and we shall also be clothed with the glory of God.

It would take a lifetime to fully explore and experience this cycle of hope! Paul refers to it three times in these five short verses of Romans. He is referring to the quality of endurance that doesn't surrender to circumstances or give way under trial. This hope is a steadfastness that holds up under life's pressing or crushing conditions. How are we able to continue hoping and worshipping while we wait? Our hope "does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (Romans 5:5).

You need not be worried about your hope being disappointed during trials and suffering because God's overflowing, gushed out, abundant love will be diffused through every area of your life during the process!

II. GOD'S OVERFLOWING LOVE

I became so excited when I studied the meaning of "poured out" or "shed abroad" as the King James Version translates the words. Let me explain! Have you ever dealt with a water leak in your house? The power of water as it diffuses, seeps, or pours through every crack or tiny opening it can find or create is amazing. We had a personal introduction to the experience one year when the pump on our washing machine malfunctioned and rinse water poured in with the wash water. Needless to say, it overflowed, seeping into many cracks, tiny openings, and rooms of our house.

Did I enjoy the disastrous mess, time and cost involved with repairs, or having to move into a hotel for a while? Not exactly! Yet, some of the blessings following the waiting were new flooring, freshly painted walls, and all the trimmings involved with a newly remodeled first floor in our home! My disappointment was overshadowed by the blessings beyond what I might have hoped to experience, and the insurance company paid the costs.

The same terminology is seen in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit is "being poured out" on the church—God's sons and daughters. This is an action verb, indicating something occurred in the past but has results continuing to the time of the Roman church and into the present. Essentially, Paul is telling these Roman believers and us, don't be overcome by the suffering, persevere through the adversity, and submit to the divine molding of your character. You will eventually circle back around to hope as you are being transformed into Christ's image from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

You need not be worried about your hope being disappointed during trials and suffering because God's overflowing, gushed out, abundant love will be diffused through every area of your life during the process!

The virgin birth of Immanuel, God with us, His sacrificial death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead may have occurred in the past, but they are conclusive proof of His unfailing love and the powerful hope He has given to us. If He fulfilled the promise of His first coming, we have reason to worship and rejoice in the expectation of His promised return. We can rest assured our hope will not be disappointed.

CONCLUSION

The Apostle Paul reminded the Romans, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Even in Malachi's day, we read of the faithful ones "who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name" (3:16). The sun of righteousness was promised to rise for them with healing in its wings, and they would go forth and skip about like calves from the stall (4:2).



PERSONAL OR COVENANT GROUP INTERACTION

Take a few moments to write in your prayer journal or share with two or three other group members your response to the following:

"If a book of remembrance was written about my life, hope would be evident in my through my _____

as I waited, worshiped, and hoped in the promises of God.

Isaiah prophetically assured us: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9:6–7).

As far back as Genesis 3:14–15, we read the prophetic promise given in the Garden of Eden: “So the LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.’” Christ has crushed the head of the serpent, Satan!

Depending upon what sources you read, the number of prophetic promises of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament varies. One source I read indicated more than 300 prophecies of the coming Messiah are part of our hope. They form remarkable evidence which authenticate the claims of Christ and show us the real meaning of the hope we celebrate during Advent.

If you are living in a season when situations of life may not look too hopeful, and you are needing a personal Advent of Christ into your circumstances, perhaps the words of Habakkuk (written even while God’s people were facing impending enemy invasion) will encourage and challenge you:

Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation (Habakkuk 3:17–18 NLT).

Habakkuk’s hope and ability to rejoice and worship while he waited was not disappointed. Keep hoping! Keep worshiping while you wait! God will continue to pour His love out in your heart through the Holy spirit, and you will not be disappointed with the outcome!

*“While We Wait . . . We Worship” was written by Kay Horner, Executive Director of The Helper Connection. You are granted permission to print, reproduce, and utilize this for personal devotion or covenant group settings without prior approval from the author.

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