

## Michael Costelli - Wait on Me

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And as the chairman said, the subject is wait on me. Actually it's waiting on the Lord, but wait on me is the catchphrase that I put on the top of my discourse, and what I'd like for us to do is just take our minds back to the time before the pre Babylonian takeover of Jesus, Judah and Israel, and what the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah endured and what they had to tell us about that experience, and the topic title is taken from Zephaniah 3.8, which reads where we read wait on me, Wait upon me, therefore wait upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey. For my determination is to gather the nations that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour out upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger, for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

So we know a little bit about Zephaniah that's revealed to us. He was a Hebrew prophet in the kingdom of Judah. He, he was a contemporary and fellow citizen of Jeremiah. He was vehement about the idolatrous practices in Jerusalem, and he must have started his prophecies before the reform of Josiah, approximately 622 B.C.

and his work included denouncing the king's deceitful counselors, where he says in Zephaniah 3.4 her prophets are light and treacherous persons. Her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. He prophesied that the cities of the Philistines would be destroyed, and the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah. They shall feed thereupon in the houses of Ashkelon, they shall lie down in the evening, for the Lord their God shall visit them, turn and turn away their captivity. Zephaniah 2.

7. He tells us in the second, in the next verse 2:9, that Moab and Ammon would be reduced to nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever, and all this would happen in the day of the Lord that loomed ahead for them, when the divine wrath would overtake Judah and the other nations. Now the significance of Zephaniah's prophecy was for all of Israel then, and then for our day. Now the time of trouble that he spoke of and is elsewhere spoken of in Daniel is a time such as never was since the world began.

There'll be the gathering of the nations, politically, economically, socially, and so forth. He'll assemble the nations through improved communications, travel, means, and don't we know that today that nothing happens that isn't noised abroad to the whole world. Within hours all nations will be united in one purpose, so that God can pour out his wrath and dissolve the governments to establish him whose right it is to rule. Ezekiel 21:27 It's a time when Jehovah is expressing severe anger and rage with the world. He speaks of his jealousy or anger, for he will have no other gods before him.

Exodus 20, verse 3. It's a time spoken of, as in Psalm 76, verses 8 through 10, after which the people will say, as in Isaiah 25:9 Lord, this is our God. We have waited for him, and he will save us, and brethren, we've been waiting for the inauguration of the kingdom for a long time. Ever since I came into the truth, I thought things were going to be wrapped up in no time.

But here we are, 46 years later. But what we want to consider this morning is the subject of waiting as it pertains to us as new creatures in Christ. There's amazing number of references in the Scriptures when you look up waiting or to wait, and we want to consider the virtue of waiting in the context of our Christian walk and how it edifies us and builds up our character. So the word wait means to linger, anticipate, look forward, to delay, expect, hang on, remain, stand by, stay, stick

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around, watch, halt, hold, interim.

There's a whole lot of synonyms and wait. The word wait or any of its forms can be used either as a noun or as a verb. As a verb, it's like I rang the bell and I waited, or I can't wait for tomorrow, and of course, as a noun, we had a long wait. Now we've all had to wait on something throughout our lives.

It's not a unique experience. As children we can probably remember being told to wait for a lot of things, mostly till we got older. Can you remember Christmas Eve? Or waiting for Santa Claus to come for Christmas? The Presence we had to wait.

We had to discipline our little lives to and we can remember when our friends were going out to play and needing to wait until we put on proper clothing. Or being told that we needed to wait until we got a little older to do something.

Or then we could be told by our mother, you just wait till your father gets home.

I heard that many times he worked shift work and sat in dread. So what's the first thing that comes to our mind when we hear the word wait? Is it trying to get into a popular restaurant on a Friday night? Is it rush hour traffic? Is it important test results that we're expecting?

Waiting is practically synonymous with doing nothing besides just sitting there fidgeting with our phones and staring at the ceiling, expecting the clock second hand to keep on ticking. Until just recently, most of the world was paralyzed as they remained hunkered down in their homes, waiting for the coronavirus to loosen its grip. So waiting is a relevant topic for all of us, and when the Bible speaks of waiting, it's an entirely different thing than what we do after we take a number at the motor vehicle department. Biblical waiting is not a passive activity, but it's demonstrated by active dependence and obedience to God.

Waiting upon God is a spiritual discipline that we should seek to practice in our lives. Consider the alternative of the Israelites in the desert, who, after being saved through the river Nile, forgot the loving care Jehovah exercised in their behalfs and did not wait, we read in Psalm 106:13 they soon forgot his works. They waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert and he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul, and later in verse 22, they forgot God as their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt in verse 26 wherefore he lifted up his hand against them to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their seed among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. So as the count goes, Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, he stood up in judgment, and God averted the plague.

But this should be a sobering lesson to all of us about waiting on the Lord and the significance of it.

Now we opened with a brief discussion of Zephaniah's warning to the Jews and the prophet Zephaniah traces his lineage back to good King Hezekiah. Zephaniah is a book of vivid contrasts. Compared to other prophets, he paints a darker picture of God's judgment and a brighter picture of Israel's future glory. Their worship of the Lord was often mixed with pagan practices which were abominable to God. God's judgment on this divided camp is called the day of the Lord, which makes up the theme of his book in the prophecy God has bid his guests, as stated in Zephaniah 1:7 hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God for the day of the Lord is at hand for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice he has bid his guests, and he also has invited them.

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In Revelation 19:17, where we read and I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of the heaven, come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God.

Another key element of Zephaniah's teaching is the concept of a remnant that is protected in the day of the Lord, perhaps a holy remnant. We read in Zephaniah 2, verses 7 through 9 and the coast shall be for a remnant of the house of Judah. They shall feed thereupon in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening, for the Lord their God shall visit them and turn away their captivity. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation, the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them, and in verse 13 of chapter 3, the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor nor speak lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

So Zephaniah distinguishes between the whole of Israel, that is sinning, and doing abomination in God's eyes, and then a remnant which later is obedient what are some of the benefits of waiting?

Waiting develops virtue if it's pursued in the right Spirit. Long suffering is one of the fruitage of the Spirit Paul speaks of in Galatians 5:22. So we know waiting develops patience. Waiting also allows reconsideration of a matter of we might say, on second thought, I'll do this and maybe make a better decision. Waiting can prevent rash judgment and often making a mistake.

Waiting can bring help, as expressed in Psalm 33, verse 20 Our soul waiteth for the Lord, for he is our help and our shield.

But we can wait for good things to happen. Isaiah 64:4 tells us that good things says, for since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor hath eye seen. O God, beside thee what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. There's that word waiting.

In Daniel 12:12 we read that waiting brings blessings because it says, blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the, 305 and 30 days. That's 1335 days from 539 A.D. to 1874, and brethren, we're deriving the blessings of those saints who earnestly waited 1335 years.

We're told that those who are watching are blessed in Luke chapter 12, verses 35 through 37, where we read let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord when he shall return from the wedding and when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he comes, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make him to sit down to meet, and will come forth and serve them.

There's many nine ways that I've listed here in which we can wait on the Lord, and if I can work my PowerPoint right, you'll be blessed and otherwise no, the ways are realizing number one realizing God's sovereign control of all things in our lives realizing our dependence upon God, seeking strength from the Lord, being patient and quiet, avoiding needless fear and worry continuing to fear to learn and obey God's commands waiting on the Lord to save seeking the Lord through constant prayer and anticipating Christ's kingdom in the first to become proficient in patient waiting We've got to acquiesce to the fact that we have turned our lives over to our sovereign Heavenly Father in obedience to his word, and learned that in whatsoever state we are to be content. Philippians 4:11 here's what the wise man tells us in Ecclesiastes 7:13 14 Consider the work of God for who can

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make that straight which he has made crooked in the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider God also hath set the one over against the other to the end that man should find nothing after him. Yes, even our present situation is of the Lord, and we can't alter our Heavenly Father's will for us. As much as we may want to take matters into our hands, we are first to wait upon the Lord by acknowledging his sovereign purpose in it. If it were up to us, we would cause our Father to change how he deals with us.

However, Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose and that we must wait on the Lord and that he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord Realizing our dependence upon God, coming to terms with it the natural man, the old nature, wants the freedom and the independence to do whatever he wants to do, whenever he wants to do it, wherever and how he wants to do it. But in truth we're dependent upon God even for our next heartbeat. As Job rightly confessed in Job 1:21 and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return hither. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, and the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 11:36, for of him and through him, and to him are all things to whom glory be forever, all of creation belongs to God, and depends upon him for life, whether they recognize or profess it or not, and depend upon them but the consecrated child, the footstep follower of Jesus, have been adopted into their heavenly family and enjoy special privileges of dependence upon him. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19 what know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? We should listen carefully, for that still small voice telling us, quote, thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way walk ye in it when ye return to the right hand, and when you turn to the left, Isaiah 30:21, 23 and Proverbs, which tells us in 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not on thine own understanding.

We've got to seek strength from the Lord. We have to realize our helplessness in times of peril. Especially we should recall that the experiences of the disciples in the boat with Jesus and they became sore afraid. Their reaction to the storm was to awaken Jesus and call his attention to the impending danger. Their cry was, don't you care that we perish?

Brother Russell tells us in reprint 3324 that travelers tell us that the Sea of Galilee is quite subject to windstorms. Dr. Thompson, describing his own experiences on the Little Sea, says, the sun had scarcely set when the wind began to rush down toward the lake, and it continued all night long with constantly increasing violence, so that when we reached the shore the next morning, the face of the lake was like a huge cauldron. The wind hurled down every wadi from the northeast and east with such fury that no efforts of powers could have brought a boat to shore at any point along that coast. To understand the causes of these sudden tempests, we must remember that the lake lies low, 600ft lower than the ocean that the vast and naked plateaus of the Wallan rise to such great height, spreading backward into the wilds of Haran and upward to the snowy Mount Hermon that the watercourses have cut out profound ravines and wide gorges converging to the head of the lake, and that these act like gigantic funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains.

Of course, the Master cared But this was a test of their faith, and to some extent they acted properly seeking his help.

The following psalms are petitions of prayer to God for help. Psalm 33:20, which we've already quoted. Our soul waits for thee, and our help he is our help and our shield. Psalm 46:2 Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of

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the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with swelling thereof Wait for the LORD be strong, and he shall strengthen thy heart. All ye that hope in the lord.

And finally think of one of the most oft quoted verses in the Bible. Psalm 23:1 2 the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want he maketh me to lie down in green pastures he leadeth me beside still waters.

Another way to learn to wait is to be patient and quiet. Easier said than done, to be sure, the COVID pandemic changed all of our lives in one way or another. Our routines were interrupted, whether we liked it or not. Throughout the nation. Business came to a grinding halt in many ways.

Our traveling days to conventions were suspended, thankfully renewed of recent days, Zoom and other video conferencing were provided by our Heavenly Father. Perhaps the net result was to cause us to reflect upon the blessings of the past and to realize all the way he had led us. Lo, These many days of our walk with him. Hopefully we did as the psalmist said, be still and know that I am God.

Jeremiah expresses in laments 3:26 that it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord, and in Psalm 62, 5 he says, My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.

When we're silent and we can hear that still small voice, and best listen to God speak to us. What is the Lord teaching us through this patience, perhaps? What is he teaching you?

Psalm 135,6 tells us, I wait for the Lord My soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Quiet. Patience is important part of an outgrowth of waiting for it should drive us to hope in God, avoiding needless fear and worry. Fear is natural in mankind, and it's a result of Adamic fall.

It's produced a myriad of damaging conditions to the heart of man, brother Russell writes in Reprint or rather in volume 5, page 253. Likewise, also those who have the spirit of fear are helped to counteract it by the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of love, if they receive it for perfect love casteth out fear as they learn to know God through his word and the gracious plan of the ages therein set forth. It removes from their minds the great incubus of fear and dread which torments so many. It gives them, instead of fear, hope, a hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of a sound mind. We're grateful for the Holy Spirit of truth.

It's kept us through the many trials and and we've had, and will continue to until we finish our course. Let's consider a couple of psalms that deal with this issue. Psalm 56:3 and 4 says, what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee, and in God will I in God I have put my trust I will not fear what man, what flesh can do to me.

And again in Psalm 46:1 3 God is our refuge and strength, the very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear will not we fear, though the word the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof? Selah. Additionally, Jesus instructs us to avoid worrying about our lives, because we have a heavenly Father who takes care of us. In Matthew he tells us, therefore I say unto you, take no and I'll bracket anxious thought for your life

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what ye shall eat, what ye shall drink, yet for your body, what ye shall put on Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you can? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature?

We should continue to learn and obey God's commands. Becoming familiar with God's laws, and understanding more of his mind is a sure way to fight fear and worry. This was the psalmist's undertaking in Psalm 119, where he found peace and comfort in what some might consider a curious place. The law of God, it reads, I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have considered comforted myself. Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law waiting, or Expecting the Lord to save us we can expect that our Heavenly Father will deliver on his word. He has told us that his word will go out. In Isaiah 55:11 so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. So we have his guarantee embedded in his word, that he will perform his good and holy will.

Therefore we can be sure, as he has helped us in the past, that he will help going forward. The following verses express our heart's desire regarding his watch care over us. In Genesis 49:8 we read, I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord, and in Psalm 62, verses 12 Truly my soul waiteth upon God from him cometh my salvation he only is my rock, and my salvation he is my defense I shall not be greatly moved. In Isaiah 25:9, it shall be said in that day, lo, this is our God.

We have waited for him, and he will save us. This is our Lord. We have waited for him. We will make him glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Proverbs 20, verse 22 tells us, say not thou, I will recompense evil, but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee, and then finally Psalm back up a second, maybe I don't have it on there.

So the next item is to seek the Lord through constant prayer. You know, we're told to pray, always to watch and pray. In Acts chapter 12, we find a reminder of the importance of prayer in difficult times. We're told in verse one that King Herod laid hands on some who belong to the church. John's brother James, one of the original disciples, was killed by the sword.

It was mentioned yesterday which actually meant probably beheading Jesus. One of rather Peter, one of Jesus closest disciples and a major leader in the early church, was arrested and imprisoned, and how did these members of the Jerusalem church respond to all of this distressing news? Did they mourn? Probably.

Did they fear? Probably. But did they pray? Certainly. For in verse 5 we find them in earnest prayer.

And God heard these prayers. For in verse 12 we see that after obtaining his freedom from the Jerusalem dungeon with the help of an angel, Peter heads to the house of John. Mark and I really like brother David's discourse yesterday on that that great escape. I really appreciated the allegory there, and what does he find when he when he arrives there?

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He finds many gathered together and beseeching God in prayer, and we're told in Romans 12:12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer and in Philippians 4, be careful for nothing but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be known to God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, and the last item with regard to our waiting, and certainly not the last, the only is longing for Christ's kingdom, and I don't know any group that does it better than the Bible students. I mean the denominations talk about the kingdom in esoteric ways and vague descriptions and don't quite get it hit it by the mark.

The Jehovah's Witnesses understand it, but in a real legalistic way. But the brethren understand and look forward affectionately to those days when sin will be destroyed.

Romans 18:23 tells us speaks to the aspect of anticipation of God, when he tells us that the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God for the creature was made subject to vanity not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Peter tells us in 3:11,15 that seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace without spot, and blameless and account that the suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you. We have our Master's confirmation that there is a place being prepared for us all, of which Jesus told his disciples in John 14:2,4. Now at this point I feel like it's important to mention that waiting on the Lord, waiting on God doesn't mean inactivity, but it means just the opposite.

We have the admonition in Ecclesiastes 9:10, that whatsoever thy hand findeth to do. Do it with all thy might. For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave. Whither thou goest. We simply need to wait until the day of the Lord receives us there to be with him.

And what a glorious day that will be.

In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also, and whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know.

And as the permission of evil continues, it reminds us that we wait like a bride waits with longing, expectation for her wedding day. Christ, our sweet bridegroom, is grooming us, and he has promised to make all things new we read in Revelation. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the new first heaven, and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more, and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

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And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. For the former things have passed away.

And he who was seated on the throne said, behold, I make all things new.

How much more time do we have? Five minutes.

Okay, well, we'll just consider briefly Jeremiah's dilemma. I'd hope to get a little further on, but, you know, he's a really good example of waiting, and his history was one of intense service to God, and waiting was a big part of his service. He saw turbulent periods of the two small Hebrew kingdoms and how they were wiped out with the fall of Samaria in 721, Jerusalem in 587, and during those times he spoke and he wrote as it's recorded in Lamentations.

See if I can find that part, he Sundays. In chapter one, verses one through 18, Jeremiah voices his renewed confidence in Jehovah. But starting in verse 19, he says, remembering mine affliction and mine misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not they are new every morning.

Great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith the soul. Therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth mouth his mouth in the dust. If so be, there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him.

He is filled full with reproach for the Lord will not cast off forever but though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. A mouth in the dust is speaking of an attitude of suppliant and humble submission to God's dealings as righteous and loving in design, and I recall vividly a talk by brother Carl Hagensik about 40 years ago in Gulfport, Mississippi, and he titled it A Diet of Dust. Speaking on Jeremiah's dilemma, Jeremiah found it difficult to be diverted from his somber frame of mind. He did acknowledge God's sovereignty, but he seems to have expressed his confusion over the fact that God had allowed this suffering.

Nevertheless, in the final analysis, he avows God's hands in the painful experience as he mentions the need for patient endurance of the situation. The message of Jeremiah is a statement of God's mercy to his people on a daily basis, despite the Israelites faithful, unfaithful, a constant unfaithfulness to him. The destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was one of the most profound examples of the permission of evil to the people of God and brethren. We could go on and on with notable examples of waiting, like the patriarch Job, who waited he wanted to wait in the grave and Noah, who waited 40 days in the ark, and David, who waited 15 years to be king of Israel, and yes, even our glorious heavenly Father had to wait these millennia for the opportunity to pour out from heaven blessings of life that have been Deferred for over 6,000 years due to sin and obedience.

So Jehovah got plenty of experience waiting for his bride, as we read in Isaiah 30, 18, 21 and therefore will the LORD wait that he may be gracious unto you and therefore will he be exalted, that

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he may have mercy upon you. For the Lord is a God of judgment. Blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem shall weep no more. He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry, when he shall hear it, and he will answer thee.

And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner anymore. But thine eyes shall see thy teachers, and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way. Walk ye in it when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left. So let's comfort one another with the language of patient endurance as we pray. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and may the Lord add his blessing.