



Faith & Patience

Grace Reigns: God's Gospel for All Peoples Series # 26

Genesis 15-16

David Sunday

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There's a peace I've come to know
Though my heart and flesh may fail
There's an anchor for my soul
I can say, it is well

Jesus has overcome
And the grave is overwhelmed
The victory is won
He is risen from the dead

And I will rise when He calls my name
No more sorrow, no more pain
I will rise on eagle's wings
Before my God, fall on my knees
And rise, I will rise

(I Will Rise Lyrics by Chris Tomin)

How many of you believe God keeps all His promises? How many of you think you're going to see the fulfillment of all of God's promises in your lifetime? These promises are because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And this is where patience comes in as we wait for His final return. We don't like to wait, do we? I read something last week that said, "Waiting stretches our hearts until we may feel there is no elasticity left. Yet God tells us to wait and to wait and to wait." Faith and patience—they go hand in hand.

Hebrews 6:12 (NIV) says, "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." Faith is believing what you cannot see, and if you're going to continue in faith you're going to have to cultivate patience.

And that's the lesson God's Word brings to us today from Genesis 15 and 16. I want to draw out from this passage this one simple thread: the relationship between faith and patience. I want to keep it very simple and focused on some of the lessons about faith and patience I think we all need as we continue in our pilgrimage to glory together.

So how do we grow in faith and patience?

1. Understand that God's Delays are not Always Denials

We see this first lesson in Genesis 15:1-11:

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ² But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁴ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

⁷ And he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." ⁸ But he said, "O Lord God how is I to know that I shall possess it?" ⁹ He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

"Fear not, Abram," we read in verse one. Now, why might Abram have been afraid? Well, we need to think back to chapter 14 where we left off a couple weeks ago. Several kings from the East had come down into the Dead Sea region and made war.

I need to pause here for a minute and just make a correction to the sermon from two weeks ago. Several times over I said in that sermon that one of the kings was named Chedorlaomer, "Cheddar Laomer." The next night we had an elder meeting, and the elders presented me with a gift that I'm going to hold close to my heart: [A Guide to Pronouncing Biblical Names](#). They all signed this book. One of them wrote, "To my favorite cheddar-head." I discovered in studying this book that it's actually "Keedarlaomer." So I stand corrected. Be thankful you have elders who care about precision in the Word.

So these kings had made war on that region, and Abram was empowered by God to defeat them. Then at the end of the chapter, Abram refused to receive glory from those kings and refused to take tribute from them. He would not rob God of the glory that was due His name.

He said these very memorable words in Genesis 14:22-23: *"But Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, "I have made Abram rich."'"*

So Abram has given God the glory. He has refused worldly wealth and the worldly route to greatness. But now here he is in the Promised Land, and he has yet to really take possession of it. And he doesn't have an heir. The two great concerns on his mind are, "How am I going to know that You're really going to give me this land?" and "How am I going to have descendants as numerous as the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky?"

So God says to him in 15:1, "Abram, don't be afraid. I am your shield, I will protect you, and *your reward shall be very great.*" Or the New King James Version says, "*I am...your exceedingly great reward.*" "I will be your protector. I will be your reward. Fear not."

Elisabeth Elliot said, "Fear arises when we imagine that everything depends on us." Isn't that the truth? Abram is being reminded here, "Nothing depends on you, Abram. I'm your shield. I'm your very great reward. I will reward you. I will take care of you. Don't be afraid. It doesn't depend on you." Well, that's a comfort! Faith doesn't mean, though, that we don't have any questions. Faith goes to God with the questions we have.

So we see Abram asking questions of God in verse two:

"What are You going to give me, Lord? I continue childless, and the only heir that I can perceive is this servant in my household named Eliezer. So how are You going to give me offspring? Am I to give all that I have to this servant? Then he asks Him again in verse eight, "*O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess the land?*"

So Abram's asking these two questions of the Lord about offspring and land. And the Lord twice confirms to Abram that He is going to be faithful to both promises. He's going to provide offspring for him, and He's going to give him the land. God takes him outside at night and says, "As many as the stars in the sky, beyond number, so shall your offspring be."

The key verse in this section is verse six. We've been going back and forth between Genesis and Romans. Remembering where we left off in Romans 4 back in August, we see this verse is crucial in the New Testament, where Paul uses this verse to show that believers are justified. We are declared righteous by God through faith and apart from works, and it comes back to this verse, Genesis 15:6, "And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness."

Abram did not have a perfect faith yet. It was not a fully mature faith. He was still going to be faltering in his faith. But there was faith in the true God. It's not the strength of your faith or the quantity of your faith—it's the object of your faith, the One in Whom you are trusting—that matters. Abram believed the Lord. He heard God's word and believed in Him, so God said, "That's righteousness in My eyes. You are justified, Abram, by faith."

Understand that God's delays are not always denials. We have to wait. Tim Keller has repeated this story of Abram's life but the original source was unknown I think this is a good description of Abram's life.

God says, "I'm going to send you out."
Abraham says, "Where?"
God says, "I'll tell you later. Right now, just go."
And then God says, "I will give you a land."
Abraham says, "Where?"
And God says, "I'll tell you later. Just wander."
And then God says, "I'll give you a child."
Abraham says, "How?"
God says, "I'll tell you later. Just wait."
And then finally, God sends a child. And God says, "Take him up to the mountain and sacrifice him."
Abraham asks, "Why?"
God says, "I'll tell you later. Just go. Walk up the mountain. Take the knife. Take the fire."

That's the life of Abram. This section ends with Abram waiting until nightfall, driving birds of prey away from these sacrificial animals that have been set out and he falls asleep.

The question for us is: are we content to trust in a God Who says, "I'll tell you later. Just wait. Take what I've promised, believe in what I've revealed and leave the rest up to Me." Wait on the Lord. His delays are not necessarily denials.

2. Realize the Scope of God's Promises is Vastly Larger than the Span of our Lifetime

In Genesis 15:12-16, we learn that in order to cultivate faith and patience we need to realize that the scope of God's promises is vastly larger than the span of our lifetime. We see that in God's words in verse 12:

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

What is God doing here? He's telling Abram, "I've got a plan for the fulfillment of the promises I've made to you that's going to stretch out way beyond your lifetime, 400 years and

beyond. Your descendants are going to be oppressed by the Egyptians for 400 years. And then afterward they're going to come back out from Egypt with great possessions." Do you know when that exodus is going to take place in relation to Abram's lifetime? It's like 600-800 years after these words were spoken to Abram.

As I was thinking about that, I thought of a verse in "Amazing Grace" (by John Newton) that we don't always sing, but it's really important.

The Lord has promised good to me
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

And then we sing:

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

It's going to take eternity for us to comprehend the scope of God's promises; for all of eternity we will see that He never failed to keep a single promise. He will be completely faithful to every word He has spoken.

What this paragraph does for Abram is what it needs to do for us. It needs to change our perspective on our little lifespan. We are actors in a great drama of redemption, and our lives are significant because of the story in which we're included. We are part of God's drama of redemption, but we need to understand that God's not committed to carrying out the whole story in the little span of our lives.

We get to play a role in this because we're part of the big story, but God's carrying His purposes out patiently. And we have to wait.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

(God Moves in a Mysterious Way by William Cowper & John Newton, 1774)

God's even patient in the way He executes judgment on His enemies. Look at verse 16. The Amorites were some of the main people dwelling in the land of Canaan who deserved God's judgment. But God says, "I'm going to wait four generations." God is patient, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). He's waiting until the iniquity of the Amorites has reached its full measure before He will unleash judgment on them.

So this section puts things in perspective for us. The patience of God in fulfilling His promises means that we need to look beyond the span of our lifetime for the fulfillment of them.

Remember this, in the words of Ben Patterson (chaplain at Westmont University), "What God does in us while we wait is as important as what it is we are waiting for." Do you believe that? God's work in us while we're waiting means just as much as whatever we're waiting for. We've got to value that work in us.

3. Trust God's Oath, Covenant & Blood

We see some mysterious symbolism in Genesis 15:17-20 as God is setting up these animals for a sacrificial offering to make a covenant.

When a covenant was made in the ancient Near East, they didn't sign papers. They would sacrifice animals, lay them out in two separate rows and then the two parties would walk in between the separated animals as a way of saying, "So may it be done to me if I fail to keep my word. May I be cut in two if I don't keep my word." They would call this the making of a covenant, the cutting of a covenant or to cut a covenant.

So we come to verse 17. "*When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.*" The smoking fire pot and flaming torch symbolized God's presence in the midst of Israel as they passed through the wilderness to the Promised Land (Exodus 13:17-22). It's also what Moses saw on Mt. Sinai, the mountain flaming in smoke (Exodus 19:18).

So the people of Israel, as they would read these words hundreds of years later—inspired through the Holy Spirit and given to Moses—would see themselves as the heirs of God's promises to Abram, and they would realize that just as God was faithful to Abram, as God was present with Abram, He would be faithful to and present with them.

So when two parties made a covenant, they would pass together through those separated animals. But look at verse 17. Where is Abram when this covenant is being made? What is Abram doing? He's sound asleep. He doesn't pass between the animals. Only the Lord does. The Lord does this alone.

Verses 18-19: "*On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.'*"

God said, "I'm going to give you this land." Then God passes through those pieces alone, as if to say, "I take full responsibility for the fulfillment of this covenant. If this covenant is

broken, may I be torn in two. If this covenant is broken, may I be pierced. If this covenant is broken, may I be crushed.”

We know that ultimately God Himself was crushed. God Himself was broken and pierced for His covenant-breaking people. And in being broken, in being crushed, He sealed a new covenant for us that will never be broken. God swears on His own life here that He will be faithful to the promises that He's made to Abram. We are to take great comfort and encouragement from God's oath, His covenant and His blood.

Hebrews 6 gives a great commentary on the significance of this covenant for us. It's right after verse 12, to which I already referred, where the writer of Hebrews says, “We do not want you to become sluggish or lazy, *but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*” Now he brings us right to this incident in the life of Abram in verses 13-20:

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.

Now, just pause there for a minute. We're going to see in the next chapter that Abram wasn't so patient after all. He faltered. But at the end of it all, God showed His grace and mercy—He said Abram patiently waited. What a kind evaluation God makes of the lives of His faithful people. God says Abram was patient and he obtained the promise. Thank God for His grace and kindness in the way He evaluates His people!

Verses 16-20:

For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

What does God want us to learn from this covenant with Abraham? He wants us to learn to wait patiently and we will obtain the promise. He wants us to be convinced of the unchangeable character of God's purposes. He wants us to know that it is impossible for God to lie. He wants us to be strongly encouraged to hold fast to the hope of the gospel, looking unto Jesus Who has gone into the Holy of Holies as a Forerunner on our behalf.

That's the significance of this covenant with Abram for God's people today. So trust God's oath. Trust God's covenant. Trust God's blood that He shed on the cross, and let that encourage you to hold fast patiently to the hope of the gospel.

4. Beware of Trying to do God's Thinking for Him

Let's move on to Genesis 16:1-6. These two chapters (15 and 16) really need to go together because they show us the effects of impatience.

You'd think, after all of this—God showing Abram the stars in the sky and God making this covenant—that Abram would think, “Okay, God. I'm all out for You now. I'm 100% there. I'm never going to distrust You again. I'm never going to get impatient again. However You want to bring about Your promise, I trust You to do it.”

That's what we would think Abram would do—right? Because that's what we always do—right? Whenever God shows His faithfulness in our lives, we're think, “Okay. I'll never doubt You again, God. I will walk with You faithfully. I'm never going to sin again.” Right? No!

Abram is a lot like us. Sarai is a lot like us. Verse one, “*Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children.*” And she's saying to him, “Now, honey, we're not getting any younger here. What's going on? Where's this promise? How is this going to be fulfilled?”

“*She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar,*” and Sarai thinks, “Oh. I've heard about people in the neighborhood doing things like this. When they can't have a baby themselves, maybe they could use a concubine.” This was an accepted practice in the ancient Near Eastern world—but it was not the way of faith. It was not the way God approved.

“*Sarai said to Abram, 'Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children.'*” Which is a great heartache for Sarai and for anyone who has experienced infertility. So she thinks, “I'm going to help God bring about the fulfillment of His promise. I'm just going to give Him a little helping hand.”

How has it gone for you whenever you've tried to help God work out His plans, whenever you've tried to bring about God's promises through your own efforts? In 16: 2 Sarai says, “*Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.*’ And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.” Who else in Genesis listened to the voice of his wife and havoc followed? Adam and Eve.

“*So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived.*” And everything starts to unravel. “*When she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.*”

So now Hagar despises Sarai, and then Sarai gets very mad at Abram. Verse five, *“And Sarai said to Abram, ‘May the wrong done to me be on you. I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!’”*

It is pretty strong when your wife says to you, “May the Lord judge you for what you just did.” What did he do? He just did what Sarai told him to do and now she’s really mad about it.

“But Abram said to Sarai, ‘Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please.’ Great man, here, throwing Hagar under the bus and saying, “I’m washing my hands of this. I’m not going to have anything to do with that woman. Here, you do to her as you please.”

“Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.” What a mess. Beware of trying to do God’s thinking for Him.

What’s the lesson here? As Hilary of Poitiers (310-367; sometimes referred to as the "Athanasius of the West") said, “All unbelief is foolishness.” Why? Because “it takes such wisdom as its own finite perception can attain, and measuring infinity by that petty scale, concludes that what it cannot understand must be impossible.”

But Abram and Sarai thought “We’re old. We don’t have any children. I can’t understand how God’s going to fulfill this promise, so it must be impossible unless we get involved and try to bring this about in our own way.” This is unbelief which takes such wisdom as its own finite perception can attain, and measures infinity by that petty, puny scale, saying, “Whatever I cannot understand must be impossible.” Unbelief is the result of incapacity engaged in argument. Beware of trying to do God’s thinking for Him.

5. Marvel at the Patience & Faithfulness of God Looking After You

Look at the grace of God in Hagar’s life after this sordid incident. Verse seven, *“The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness...”*

I think this is the first time the angel of the Lord appears in Genesis, and it’s not to an Israelite. It’s to a foreign woman who has been despised and mistreated. God mercifully comes to her in the wilderness, *“...on the way to Shur.”* She’s heading back to Egypt. She’s saying, “I’ve got to get out of Dodge. Things are not going to go well for me anymore in Abram’s household.”

Verse eight, *“And he said, ‘Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?’ She said, ‘I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.’ The angel of the Lord said to her, ‘Return to your mistress and submit to her.’”* In other words, “You’ve got to go back now, Hagar. You’ve cast your lot with Abram. You need to stick with Abram and his household because I’m going to bless you in association with him.”

Verse ten, *"The angel of the Lord also said to her, 'I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.'" God promises, "I'm going to make you fruitful."*

Verse 11, *"And the angel of the Lord said to her, 'Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael [which means God hears], because the Lord has listened to your affliction.'" God hears. God is being merciful.*

But notice verse 12. Impatience does not bring about God's promise. Impatience always brings about trouble. The whole Arab-Israeli conflict to this day speaks of what happens when faith gives way to impatience. Verse 12, *"He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."*

So Ishmael is not going to be a light to the nations. There's going to be turmoil, tension and difficulty. But Hagar recognizes God's grace and kindness to her. Verses 13-16:

So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Now I want to ask, do we need any more than this? To know that the living God hears us, sees us, is attentive to us? That He provides for us, is watching over our every step, is protecting us all the way? To know that "His eyes run to and fro throughout the earth that He might strongly support those who trust in Him," (2 Chronicles 16:9)? That He will supply whatever we lack?

Elisabeth Elliot said, "God has promised to supply all our needs. What we don't have now we don't need now." Do you believe that? God sees you. He is taking care of you. He is providing for you. You don't have it now—you don't need it now.

All of us come with unfulfilled longings. Some of you might wish you were married right now, but you're not. Some of you have been separated through death from dear loved ones. Some of you are married and you're wondering, "How am I going to continue in such a miserable marriage?"

Some of you are waiting for a financial turnaround and it seems like you're always right on the edge of not having enough. You wonder, "How is God going to take care of me, not next year—this week?" Some of you are dealing with relationships that are so sour, and you have tried and tried and tried to fix this, but you can't.

Some of you are facing persistent temptations, and you long to be stronger in faith and further along in your sanctification. You feel like this temptation just keeps nipping you in the heels and making you stumble; you're frustrated.

Here's the question: can you be patient with your unfulfilled longings, knowing that God sees you, hears and is attentive to your needs? Can you rejoice in your great salvation, even if there are a lot of things in your life right now that aren't going the way you wish they would?

Can you have a calm, sweet confidence and joy even if it means you must wait for the return of Jesus Christ for all your longings to be fulfilled? Is that okay? Are you willing to wait for the return of our Savior?

Think about it. If He gave us everything we want right now, what would we be waiting for? Doesn't the fact that our Savior is in heaven promising to come back mean that in this gap—in this "between" time while we're waiting for His return—we should have to have unfulfilled longings in our heart that cause us to cry out and wait for His return and desire His appearing? Isn't that right, given the fact that He hasn't come back yet? Is He not worthy of waiting for?

I want to close with a little poem called "Wait" whose author is anonymous. He or she writes:

Desperate and helpless and longing I cried,
Patiently, lovingly, my Lord replied.
I pled and I wept for a clue to my fate,

And the Master so gently said, "Child, you must wait."

"Wait? You said, wait?" my indignant reply,
"Lord, I need answers! I need to know why!
Is Your hand shortened or have You not heard?
By faith I have asked, and I'm claiming Your Word!
My future and all to which I can relate
Hangs in the balance, and You tell me, 'Wait.'
I'm needing a yes, or a 'go-ahead' sign,
Or even a 'no' to which I can resign.

And, Lord, You promised that if we believe,
We need but to ask and we shall receive.
And, Lord, I've been asking, and this is my cry—
I'm weary of asking, I need a reply!"

Then quietly, softly, I learned of my fate
As my Master replied once again, "You must wait."

So I slumped in my chair, defeated and taut,
And grumbled to God, "So, I'm waiting for what?"

He seemed then to kneel, and His eyes wept with mine,
And He tenderly said, "I could give you a sign.
I could shake the heavens and darken the sun,
I could raise the dead and cause the mountains to run.

All you seek I could give, and pleased you would be;
You would have what you want, but you wouldn't know Me.
You'd not know the depths of My love for each saint.
You'd not know the power that I give to the faint.
You'd not learn to see through the clouds of despair.
You'd not learn to trust just by knowing I'm there.
You'd not know the joy of resting in Me

When darkness and silence were all you could see.
You'd never experience that fullness of love
As the peace of My Spirit descends like a dove.
You'd know that I give and I save—for a start,
But you'd not know the depth of the beat of My heart,
The glow of My comfort late in the night,
The faith that I give when you walk without sight,
The depth that's beyond getting just what you asked
Of an infinite God Who makes what you have last.

And you'd never know, should your pain quickly flee,
What it means that My grace is sufficient for thee.
Yes, your dreams for that loved one overnight may come true,
But, oh the loss, if I lost what I'm doing in you!
So be silent, My child, and in time you will see
That the greatest of gifts is to get to know Me.
And though oft may My answers seem terribly late,
My most precious answer of all is still, "Wait."

Let's bow before the Lord and prepare to confess to Him our sin and our need for His grace. Before Jesus healed a boy from unclean spirits, the father said, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief" (Mark 9:14-29). We should each pray that, asking the Holy Spirit to work conviction in our hearts over areas in which we may be impatient or unbelieving. We should ask God to strengthen us in faith and patience.

"Search us, O God, and know our hearts. Try us and know our anxious, restless thoughts (Psalm 139). Find out those areas in our lives that are still not trusting, not believing, not waiting on You. Lead us in the way everlasting, the way of Your faithfulness, the way of patient, calm reliance.

May we be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise. May we not give up before Your return. We wait for you, Lord Jesus. We long for Your coming, and we look forward to it. We pray, as we come to the Lord's Table—which is a dress rehearsal for the

marriage supper of the Lamb—oh, Lord Jesus, we proclaim Your death until You come. And we pray, “Come quickly.” Oh, how we would delight for this to be the last time we eat at this Table and for the next time to be in Your presence.

So strengthen us as we come to You by faith. Fill us. Feed us. Deepen our trust and our reliance and our hope in You, we pray. Amen.

Consider the words of Psalm 130:

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!
O Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleas for mercy!*

*If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
that you may be feared.*

*I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.*

*O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.
And he will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.*

We who are in Christ are the Israel of God, we are told in Scripture, and all the promises God made to Abram are fulfilled and are “Yes” and “Amen” in Christ Jesus for believers (2 Corinthians 1:20). If you believe the Lord, and if God says of you, “Your faith is credited as righteousness because you trust that Jesus died for you and rose from the dead for your salvation,” He welcomes you now to His Table.

If you're not sure that's true of you today, it can be. Jesus says, “Come to Me. Come to Me” (John 14:6). Put your faith in Him. Say, “Lord, I believe. Be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13) and He will save you.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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