

The hardest question to deal with is the question "how long?", because if we don't know how long something is going to take, it becomes very difficult for us to deal with it. If I have something that I know how long it's going to take, then I can put up with it. A sharp pain, for example, that only lasts for a second, I can deal with that, because I know it will be over quickly. Or if there's some inconvenience that I'm dealing with, but I know how long it's going to go on, I can put up with it, because I know you will soon come to an end. But when I don't know how long it's going to take, it becomes very difficult to deal with. A pain, even a small pain, that goes on and on and on can become unbearable. Or dealing with some inconvenience that just goes on forever with no end in sight becomes all the more irritating because of it. We all want to know how long something is going to last, because then we can deal with it in our daily lives.

But Christians, this is also true when we deal with the promises of God. Because God has promised us many things. He has promised to do many things. But how often do we find ourselves asking: "Where is He? When is he going to do this? How long before he comes? How long will these things that we have to suffer with go on?" That's a question that is often presented in the Scriptures. Psalm 13, for example, says: "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" How long is this going to go on? How long do we have to deal with these things? When will you do something about this, Lord? How long, O Lord, how long? And that can be very difficult for us to deal with, because we want to know how long it's going to be before God does what He says He's going to do.

But what makes it more difficult, Christians, is that God does not tell us how long, especially when it comes to the end of all things. Jesus himself says, Matthew 24: "But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." All that Jesus has told us is to watch, to be ready so that we are not caught by surprise when it finally does come. He does not tell us when it's going to happen. He doesn't even give us an idea of when it's going to happen. All we can do is wait. And the Church has been waiting. For two thousand years the Church has been waiting. How long is it going to be, Lord? When will you finally come as you have promised to do?

But because it seems to be so long, some people begin to scoff, as Peter says in our reading. Verse 4, for example: "They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'" Nothing has changed. Everything is still the same. The sun rises in the east. The years roll on by. Season becomes the next season, and so forth. The world is the same as it has always been. People are still crazy. Maybe even crazier than they were before. But nothing has changed. And it doesn't seem like God wants to do anything about it. So maybe He's not going to come. Maybe this is one promise He's not going to keep.

But Christians, that's not true. God will do what he says, because God's promises have not failed, even though some impatiently think that they have. Because Peter wants us to see this through what God has done in the past. Because he says, think back to creation. Think what God did all those years ago. God spoke with a Word, and everything came to be. God spoke, and everything was created. God spoke; the stars were set on fire. God spoke; the earth was filled with life. God's Word has power. It does things. It does not return void. And more than this, he says, the world was destroyed at a Word of God. Because God spoke, and water covered the whole earth,

destroying everything except Noah and his family. And if God's Word can do that, Christians, if it is so powerful that it brought everything into existence, why do we think that it has somehow failed now? Why do we think that God meant what He said back then, but somehow He doesn't mean what He says now?

No, God's Word has not failed. God will do what he says He's going to do. God has told us that there will be a judgment, and it will happen, because God does what He says. God has told us that when that judgment comes, it will be a judgment of fire, which will purge this creation of all of its corruption. And it will happen, because God has said that it will. And on that day, our suffering will come to an end. All the evil that we are experiencing now will be burnt away, because God will do what He says. It will happen, because God said it, and God always does what he says.

But why? we might ask. Why does it seem like God is wasting time? Why do we have to wait? why doesn't He come back right now and bring it all to an end? He could certainly do it. He could end it all right now so that we don't have to suffer anymore. Why does it seem like He's wasting time? But Christians, He is not wasting time. God is patient, far more patient than we can ever possibly understand. God is so patient, He is willing to wait a thousand years if He has to, because as Peter tells us in verse 9 of our reading: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." God is so unbelievably patient, Christians, because He wants to save us. He waits because He wants us to turn to Him. He waits because He wants us to repent and to call on His Son, Jesus Christ. Because God could end it all right now. He absolutely could. And He would be perfectly right to do so. Nobody could say that He was doing the wrong thing. But He gives us time, Christians. He gives us time so that we would not fall into our sins, that we would not stay in our sins. God's patience is our salvation. We need to keep that in mind. And that doesn't mean that He will be patient forever. God has said that there will be a judgment, and it will happen, because he said it. But God is not wasting time. God is patient, calling on us all to turn to Him in faith.

And so, in this time of waiting, Christians, let us not waste time either. But let us do as Peter says in verse 14: "Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace." He calls us to live as Christians, living lives of holiness and godliness. Loving one another, caring for one another, just as God first cared for us. He calls for us to call on Him in prayer, to turn to Him in the midst of every trouble. Not wasting time, thinking that God will never come, but redeeming the time, making the best use of the time as we wait for our Lord to appear. That is what we are called to do as Christians.

And when we do that, Christians, something amazing will happen. Peter tells us this in verses 11 and 12: "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God?" Hastening, as in hurrying up. God will not wait. God will bring the Last Day closer. God will cut the time short. How can Peter say that? Doesn't he know that God knows the time? How can he say that God would cut the time short, that He's going to hasten the time of the end? Peter does know that Christians. And of course, God knows when this is going to happen. But God also

hears the cries of His people, and he will hurry to answer those who call on Him. God does not waste time when we are suffering in this life.

And just so that we can see this clearly, think about some other passages within the Scriptures. Think on 1 Kings chapter 21, where we hear this: "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster in his day, but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house." Now, Ahab was not a good king. Make no mistake about that. Ahab was very wicked, and he often led Israel to do terrible things, into all kinds of idolatry. And God promised him that a judgment was going to fall on him and on his house. But Ahab, for the first time in his life, listened, and he repented, turning towards the Lord. And because he repented, God pushed back the judgment. He pushed it off, so it would not come until after his death. And if God was willing to do that for a bad king who repented, Christians, how much more will He hurry to save us who call on him by faith?

Or think of Judges chapter 2, where it says this: "Whenever the Lord raised up judges for Israel, the Lord was with the judge, and He saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning, because of those who afflicted and oppressed them." Because Israel in those days was not good. They often fell into sin, and God sent judgment upon them by sending enemies to rule over them. But when Israel repented and cried out to the Lord, the Lord had pity on them, and He sent them judges to free them so that they would no longer be oppressed. And if God did that back then, Christians, how much more will He have pity on us today who call on Him in the midst of all of our troubles?

But above all, consider Luke 18, where Jesus says this: "Will not God give justice to His elect who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them?" No. God will not delay. God will not waste time while we suffer. God will come. God will come when we call on Him, bringing an end to all of our suffering. And when we cry and pray, Christians, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus," that's not a meaningless prayer, an empty thing that we just say. God will hear it, and God will answer. God will come quickly and answer us, because He wants to save us. Because God does not waste time.

So how long is it going to be? We don't know. And we don't need to know, because we know that it will come. God has said that it will, and God does not waste time. He is patient with us, because He wants us to turn to Him. But God is also hurrying to answer the cries of His people. So let us not waste time either. Let us be the Christians we are called to be. Because no matter how long it seems, Christians, it will not be as long as we fear. Our God comes! Let us get ready to meet Him!

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, You hear the cries of Your people when they cry to You for help. Deliver us from all of our suffering as You have promised to do through Jesus Christ, Your Son, in whose name we pray. Amen.