

# RIGHT WAITING

## A SERMON

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“Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Romans  
8:23

LAST Lord’s day morning we noticed the former parts of this verse; and this morning I notice the last words; “Waiting for the adoption, to wit. the redemption of our body.” One of the things by which the people of God are distinguished from all others is waiting for the Lord, and it does appear to me that therein lies that which in our present state most concerns us; are we a part of that people who are truly, savingly, and with certainty, waiting for, in that way that we shall surely possess, the glory that is to be revealed.

There are, strictly speaking, three parts in the language of our text. First, *the waiting*. Secondly, *the prize*, namely, “the redemption of our body.” Thirdly, *the doctrine of adoption*; “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”.

First, *the waiting*. In what spirit do the people wait? They wait in the spirit of decision. They are made decided for the Lord; that is to say, they are brought to know that nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ in his life and death could take away their sins. All other hope and refuge must be swept away. The next part of truth with which they are made acquainted is the order of Christ’s mediation. That is as important as the mediation itself. There is a great deal said in the Scriptures upon the order of Christ’s priesthood, the order of his mediation; and we bless the Lord that that order is clearly set forth, that he is a priest after the order, or power, of an endless life, and that he has by his one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified. Being brought to see and understand this, the people see that it all lies in those two things, namely, the substitutional work of Christ and the order of his priesthood; for that is God’s own appointment; that is the way in which the Lord has shown his love to man, in which he shows the immutability of his counsel in saving sinners; in which indeed he shows all the perfections of his nature and the exceeding riches of his grace. Now when brought thus far, there are many, many things to try such people, to get them to give up their hope and their decision. It will be important, I think, in this part of our subject for me just to name a few things, together with the fact of the distinction which the apostle makes in the preceding verse between the world at large and the people of God. Let us look for one moment at the world at large, before I come to those things that try the Lord’s people, and tempt

them to give up their hope, and to cease looking to, or waiting upon, or waiting for the Lord. The apostle in the previous verse said, and I should think it must mean the whole world, "For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." So that you get in the world the fulfilment of those solemn words, arising from the fall of man, namely, "Cursed," said the Lord to Adam, "is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life." Is not this a universal truth? Is there a man or a woman under the sun that is without his or her troubles? If they have health, it will be but a little time; youth, with all its strength, lasts but a little time; every pleasure, advantage, and comfort under the skies is short lived. "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you;" this is God's declaration. Therefore, I may here just say to the people of God, if you have troubles, one of your privileges is to believe that there is a needs-be; for the troubles of the Lord's people are to their advantage; but keeping for a moment to the others; "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return." Such is the representation of the world at large. I am no doubt this morning speaking to some that have no object, you have your anxieties and cares, but you have no object in view beyond this life; all your thoughts are how to get on in this life. As to another life, that doesn't trouble you; as to your sin, that doesn't trouble you; as to your need of Christ, that doesn't trouble you; as to your need of God's mercy, that doesn't trouble you. So then, what an infinite mercy it is for our eyes to be opened, and to have an object in view infinitely better than that which this life can present. No, I will go so far as to say this, we see what afflictions, miseries, and troubles thousands of our fellow creatures, that are without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world, are subjected to, far perhaps surpassing in a great many instances the afflictions and troubles of the Lord's people. So that we need not envy the world. One of old, it is true, did envy the ungodly, and rather staggered when he saw their prosperity; but when he thought of their end, that put him to silence; when he thought of the end, that quieted him down, and reconciled him to the Lord's dealings with him. But now let us come to the child of God waiting, and notice the things that tempt him to go away. I will describe the first thing; and the Lord knew that would be the case, and therefore has made that provision that meets that one temptation more prominent than any other provision. There is one particular thing that tempts Christians to give up their hope, and to attempt to pray no more, to read no more, to hear the word no more, to think no more about it, but give it up altogether; they will soon be in hell, and therefore it is not worthwhile to exercise any care or anxiety about eternal things. These are some of the feelings they have, all arising from one particular thing; and the Lord has made, as I have said, the provision for that one particular thing more prominent than he has any other provision; I do not know any provision that he has made so prominent as he has made that one thing; and that one thing is simply sin. The Christian feels that he is such a poor, unclean, sinful, hard-hearted, infidel, unbelieving, rebellious, poor creature that the enemy comes in and says, Why, it is monstrous for you to think that you are a Christian; a Christian is a praying man, and your heart is too hard to pray. The Christian is a humble man; where is your humility? The Christian is a spiritual man; where is your spirituality? The Christian is a man that walks with God; where is your fellowship with God? The Christian is a man that lives above sin altogether; where is your living entirely without sin? See your rebellions, and see what a poor creature you are; therefore, don't you for a moment think that there is any hope for you. Satan will work in this way, and a sight and sense of our sinfulness will tempt us to give up. I should rejoice to see more of this in the professing world. Alas, alas, professors are generally too good in their own eyes by ten thousand times. You read of a generation pure in their

own eyes, but the same infallible testimony declares that they are not washed from their filthiness. Now, the Lord, intending thus to teach his people what is in their hearts, and thus humble them, has made the provision for this department more prominent than he has any other, that they shall not be altogether discouraged. I would prove this first by the type. If you were asked what part of the Old Testament service was, of all the parts of that service, the most prominent, the most conspicuous, and about which there is more said, and concerning the management of which there are more particulars detailed than upon any other subject, the answer would be, the sacrificial department. As soon as the morning light comes, the first thing is the sacrifice; as soon as the sun is setting and the light of this world departing, there is the sacrifice. "Have you not heard," said the Savior, "how the priests profaned the Sabbath?" it was profane to labor as they did on the Sabbath day, and to offer sacrifice, it was profaning the Sabbath according to the letter of the law, but not according to the spirit of the law; because the same God that was the author of the law was the author of these sacrifices. Therefore, I say that that tempts the people the most, the provision for that the Lord has made the most conspicuous of all. And now, I ask, in the new covenant, in the gospel, in our eternal salvation, what is the most conspicuous department? Why, the substitution of Christ, the death, the atonement, the sacrifice of Christ. He was God and man in one person, and therefore there are no limits whatever to the power of his sacrifice. Your sins, though against an infinite God, are, after all, but creature acts; but his works of mediation are the works of an incarnate God, the works of Immanuel. So then, if I am speaking this morning to those who are tried upon this matter, what will it do? If you are rightly taught, it will exalt the dear Savior, I had almost said to infinity, in your estimation; and you will say, Well, if he bring me off free from sin at last, if my sin is all blotted out, and if I am saved, if he takes my sin, and if the Lord commends his love toward me, such a sinner as I am, while I was yet a sinner as I am, while I was yet a sinner Christ died for me. Just see what he died for, "when we were without strength." Is not that descriptive of what we are? Have we any strength with which to be what the law demands? "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Is not that just what we are? And when we were enemies; and have we not that same enmity in our nature now? And, therefore, I shall assert my privilege; while I would not say anything to stagger one child of God, nor to fill the mouth of the enemy with anything against us, still at the same time I am accountable to no man under the heavens for what I say. Therefore, I say this morning, if I am speaking to any seeker after the Lord, if I am speaking to anyone who is brought to know his need of the mediation of Christ, and to place his hope there, whatever has overtaken you, whatever you are the subject of, do not go away; still knock at mercy's door. Take notice of what is said, "he that seeks," not he that is good, this, that, or the other, but "he that seeks and the greater sinner you are, I mean in your own eyes, don't misunderstand me, and the more you see and feel what a poor creature you are, the more need you have to seek; "he that seeks," that is, in the all prevailing power of the name or atonement of Christ, "finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." You that ask the Lord to have mercy upon you, as the publican did, he went down to his house justified, and so shall you. Therefore, do not go away, do not run away. Do not say this evening, I am such a sinner, I feel such a poor wretch, it is no use for me to go to chapel this evening. That would be just pleasing the adversary. The adversary is trying to persuade you that you are greater than God, that you are greater than Christ, that you are greater than his mercy, greater than his grace, greater than his salvation. Thus, then, still wait. So, it is then, that the Lord has made the sacrifice of Christ more prominent than he has anything else. Why, in the very song as you enter heaven, what is the prominent point there? "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." And what is the prominent feature of the great multitude, the number that no man could number? "They washed their robes and made them

white in the blood of the Lamb.” This will be their theme to all eternity. Oh happy, thrice happy the man that is sinful enough in his own eyes, that is so convinced of what he is, as to feel that if Jesus Christ were not God and man; if his atonement had not infinite efficacy, if his work and victory were not complete, there could not be, in accordance with the holiness and justice of God, any hope for a sinner like you. If, then, Jesus Christ is God as well as man, and there is all the excellency of his whole person in his mediatorial work, you dare not despair. Therefore, said one. “Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him.” But it is a very rare thing in our day for the gospel to be preached to the poor; for salvation to be preached to the utterly lost is getting now very much out of fashion; and for poor sinners to be tried in their families, or Christians to be tried in their families, tried in the body, tried in the world, tried in all sorts of ways, and Satan coming in from time to time like a flood, the modern religion says that they can shake off these troubles as the lion shakes off the dewdrops from his mane. The reason men speak like this is because they are strangers to it. Ah, let a sinner be brought really into soul trouble, connected with other troubles, he then feels that the fleshly piety and fleshly goodness everywhere advocated, is a mere myth, a mere figment and delusion. He says, Here I am, Lord, just as your holy word describes, altogether as an unclean thing, and all my righteousness are as filthy rags. These are the poor and needy that will praise the name of the Lord. This is one thing, then, that discourages the people of God; but do not run away. I might mention a great many other things, but I will not do so, because I think this is the chief thing. Unworthy as you are, Jesus is an all-sufficient remedy. He never yet cast out one case because it was too bad; he has cast out many because they were not bad enough; but he has never cast out one because it was too bad. When the Pharisees came to John, they were not bad enough; he said to them, “O, generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” They were still at enmity with the real truth of God, with that provision which alone can save the soul. Now the Lord casts out such, but he never yet cast out one case because it was too bad. May the Lord encourage you still to put your confidence in the perfection and efficacy of the work of Christ. Hence, I go back to the Jews; Here is tomorrow morning coming; well, here is the sacrifice; here is the evening coming; well, there is the sacrifice. And by rejecting all false gods, and looking to God in this sacrificial way which he had appointed, the result would be that the Jew would realize all that we have been reading of this morning in the 26th of Leviticus. Then of course this must be taken spiritually, that we are to live with God by the infinite efficacy of the atonement, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not anything I am aware of that Satan will so try you upon as this. How he will try to drive you away from this. Joshua might have placed himself anywhere but where he was. Joshua stood before the angel of the Lord, the messenger or mediator of the new covenant; and Satan stood at Joshua’s right hand to resist him. Why, he would whisper to him, you are presumptuous; it is not for such a wretch as you are; look at the filthy state you are in. But Joshua was enabled to wait, and did he wait in vain? Ah, he waited by faith; he believed in the Angel of the covenant, placed his hope there; presently the Lord stepped in, and did he deal one word of reproof to Joshua? Was there the shadow of a reproof? No, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan.” I dare to say, Satan, if he had been allowed to have answered, would have said, Rebuke me, indeed! such an angel of light as I am. You might rebuke this Joshua; look at his filthy garments; see what a wretch he has been, and see what a wretch he is now; and yet I am to be rebuked! Why, I am an angel of light. Ah, the Lord knew he was not an angel of light. Satan can appear very pious, and he does in our day; we see the truth of the old proverb, that it is not all gold that glitters. “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” In the 15th of Ezekiel we are compared to the vine branches, “Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both the ends of it, and

the midst of it is burned. Is it useful for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was good for no work; how much less shall it be good now for any work, when the fire has devoured it, and it is burned." "Is not this a brand?" Ah, what a humbling view! But if you are taught of God, this is just what you will see and feel yourself to be. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And you know how the Lord dealt with him, clothed him in change of clothing, and said, "Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged;" and then revealed to Joshua the one foundation stone, Christ Jesus, that underwent that engraving until it reached the seven eyes of perfection of knowledge; and he said, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." So, Joshua, thus waited and was brought in some measure into what the apostle calls the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Therefore, let it ever be proclaimed from all our pulpits, I wish it was sounded more, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And the apostle Paul was not a young man, he was Paul the aged, when he penned those words, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." So the apostle's sins and sinfulness would have tempted him to go away; but he knew too well the infinite power of the dear Redeemer to save, and therefore said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." So then, none of you go away because you are so leprous, none of you go away because you feel that you are full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; don't let any go away because you think there is not one so sinful as yourself. Ah, to give up hope, and to go away, to lose confidence in Christ, is one of the greatest faults you could commit. I solemnly declare that ever since I have known the Lord, I never felt a rebuke from the Lord more keenly, and yet at the same time mixed with love, than lately, when I was ill and seemed to lose all confidence. I shall never forget the 17th of Exodus, where the people lost confidence; and something seemed to say to me, Don't you see what an infidel you are, to give up confidence in God, in Christ, in his covenant promise? Why, you believe it all; if you did not believe in Christ, then you could justly have no confidence in him; but you believe in him; and yet to give up confidence; now you think you are going to die, because the light does not shine in upon your soul, and you have not access, as it were, to the banqueting-house, and cannot realize what you have done in times past, you are going to cast away your confidence. Oh, I felt so cut up, and so ashamed of myself, and I have done ever since. I do not know that I have been able to look the Lord in the face with so much boldness ever since, nor you either; I am speaking in all earnestness; I am almost ashamed to appear before you sometimes. You say, was he weak enough for that? Who would hear such a minister as that? Why, when he was brought into the dark, he was as much afraid as the rest of us. You a watchman! Where was your lantern? where was your lamp? You always ought to have your lantern with you. But somehow or other I could not see; a sort of mistiness came over my sight; as David said, "we see not our signs." I don't think I shall get into that state again for a season; for I felt so rebuked, yet so kindly too. I seemed to enter into the spirit of the Savior's words where he said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Foolish things that you are! because these things rather puzzle you are you going to give up your confidence in me? No. Therefore says our text, "Waiting for the adoption;" looking forward to this glorious resurrection, this glorious rest, this eternal glorification, this infinity of blessedness! It is poor sinners, and sinners only, that will be received. Why, the Lord loves to see a man trembling under what he is as a sinner; for "to this man will I look, that is poor, of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word." Thus, then they wait from a consciousness of their need of Christ, of their need of that free and eternal mercy that is by Jesus Christ; and the sweetest moments of our waiting are when we can believe in the all-sufficiency of the dear Savior. Ah, let that be our

stronghold. The apostle Paul gives us to understand how it is that our hope is as an anchor to the soul; he says it is because it enters into that within the veil, where Jesus, our forerunner, has for us entered, being made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek. He has carried your name into heaven as blameless as he is blameless, as holy as he is holy, as righteous as he is righteous, as worthy as he is worthy, as welcome there as he is, as acceptable to God as he is, and as pleasing in the sight of God as he is, because you are accepted in him. What a dear covenant God have we, then, to send us such a Savior as this. These are they that are waiting rightly. If we are waiting wrongly, as the foolish virgins and many others have, then we shall be disappointed; but if we are waiting as poor and needy, needing this wonderful provision of everlasting love, then we shall not be disappointed.

But secondly, they wait not only as poor and needy; they also wait perseveringly. You know these eternal things are worth our care; they are worth infinitely more than we ever think or do. There is nothing unkind in the words of the apostle, when he says, "We ought to give the more earnest heed." Why, if there is any one thing more worthy of our care and anxiety than another, surely it is that great matter that pertains to our eternal welfare; surely it must be that because that is above all causes; surely it must be that eternal salvation that is by Jesus Christ. Let us hear what the apostle says upon this matter; how he waited not only under a sight and sense of his need, but also perseveringly. He felt, in the first place, that to be acquainted in this way with the Lord was, as we said last Lord's day morning, a treasure surpassing in value all treasures; all things we can desire are not to be compared with it; therefore, says the apostle, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung," that will include silver and gold, academical and scientific honors, and many other honors which he would have reached as an persevering, ingenious, clever man, yet he counted them but dung that he might win Christ, knowing that all these things that he might acquire by his exertions would before long corrupt and come to nothing. "And that I may be found in him" that is, in the faith, "not having my own righteousness, which is of the law" for that would bear testimony against me, "but the righteousness of Christ, even the righteousness of God by faith, and that I might know him." See how all his desires centered in Christ, and thus centered in God, because Christ is the way to God. Why, the more we know of Christ in his complexity, in the various relations he bears, the more we know of him in his mediatorial achievements, and in the covenant to which he belongs, the more we shall love him and be attached to him. Hence the apostle goes on, and he says, "If by any means," viewing this great prize, "I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." "Yes," he says, "I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Therefore, they wait under a sight and sense of what they are; at the same time, they wait perseveringly. It is a great mercy to be kept persevering, and to be kept in the ways of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ did not work out a righteousness without hard work; he did not bear our sins without hard work; he did not achieve the annihilation of them without hard work: no man ever worked as he worked, and we all rejoice that his work is indeed perfect, and we do desire to bless him for giving us so much of his spirit as thus to persevere and seek after the same things.

Then also, they wait by the help of God. We have in this chapter the help of the Holy Three beautifully set forth. "Likewise, the Spirit also helps our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." We will here notice, then, the help of the Lord; we wait by the help of the Lord.

Now what are our infirmities? They are in the latter part of the verse said to be “groanings which cannot be uttered,” and the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities. I may mention one infirmity here, and that is unbelief, our inability to believe that God loves us, our inability to believe in our interest in him. This is an infirmity. How does the Holy Spirit help this when the prayer comes, “Lord, I believe, help you my unbelief”? Why, he helps us by the word, the word which he has given. How many different scriptures have been a comfort to us, and especially by the public ministration of the word. There is no ordinance upon earth that the Lord upon the whole owns as he does the public ministration of the word, and hereby how often does he help unbelief? that is to say, helps you over your unbelief, and over your doubts and fears. How many times, upon hearing the word, you have said, Ah, that just comes to me, that just suits me, that helps me. You have come almost without hope, and gone away with almost the full assurance of hope. What is this but the Holy Spirit helping your infirmities, and making intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered? If those groanings meant the groanings or sufferings of Christ, we can easily understand it then, that they are groanings that cannot be uttered, and no doubt the words may so apply; but I think each Christian would question whether that really is the meaning, and I do not know that I could bring out what appears to me to be the meaning. Now there are infirmities spoken of, and groanings that cannot be uttered. I think the groanings that cannot be uttered refer especially to the cause of these groanings. Here again I must enter into some things which the mere professor does not understand. I think that the groanings that cannot be uttered refer to the causes of those groanings, and that these groanings in their causes cannot be uttered, because they are too bad to be uttered, as the language of heaven is too good to use on earth, for the apostle heard unspeakable words, which it was not lawful for a man to utter. He does not mean that it was not lawful to utter them in heaven, because there they use language too good for earth, it was too good to be used on earth. Could he have used the heavenly words he heard, it was not lawful; the language was too much that of Solomon’s Song, far surpassing that, that goes a long way in sublimity, in endearment, in gratulation, and in description; but the language of heaven, in relation to the church, the love of Christ, and the glory that is by Jesus Christ, will far surpass what some have called the extravagant language of Solomon’s Song. It was too good to be used on earth; the ungodly would ridicule it; they despise the endearments of the gospel, simply because they do not know them. So, on the other hand, there are groanings that cannot be uttered in the cause of them, because they are too bad to be uttered. I shall just give you a specimen or two, not definitely, I will not do that, any further than just to say that my heaviest groanings, next to mourning the absence of the Lord, are the risings of my heart against God. I am ashamed to say it, but I will say it, my heart thinks nothing of blaspheming God; my heart thinks nothing of indulging in and sending forth the worst thoughts of God. Ah, I seem sometimes as though I were full of enmity to God, led captive by the devil. I could not and would not define it. I know what it is for my eyes to range over these sacred pages with all the earnestness of an angel, a prophet, or an apostle, and in the very center of it to be beset with such awful blasphemies against God, oaths against him, everything against him, making him out infinitely worse than the devil. But thank God, this is not all that is in me; there is something in me that does not approve of this, that loathes it, that trembles at it. Now perhaps I am going too far for some. Tried believer, do you know what this is? Have you ever been so tried? Why, not two months ago I recollect one day I got into a nice spiritual train of thought, thinking of the Lord and of you; all at once I was so beset I literally trembled, and I looked round to see whether something was coming to cut me down from the face of the earth, for of all blasphemers and of all devils on the face of the earth as to depravity of nature I thought I certainly was the worst. I thought, If the Lord save a wretch like me, with a heart like mine, he can save anything. But ah, as good old

Goodwin says, the time will come when these croaking frogs, these poisonous toads, will all fall of, and the creature, the new creature, be delivered from this bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Well may it be written concerning the saints, that they shall know everyone the plague of his own heart; that each shall know his own grief and his own sore. I hope I am not startling you by thus speaking; if I were to go a great deal further, I should not go beyond the boundaries of truth. You know what is written, and is it any wonder that we should find it, as it is written, that the "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Why, none but the Lord himself. Ah, these risings up against God fill us with infirmity; they mingle with our ministry, they mingle with our hearing, with our prayer, with our conversation, they go with us everywhere, so that the Christian is thus burdened, and can in no way lift himself up. Yet the Holy Spirit from time to time brings home a word, and helps us in our infirmities, and comforts us with the thought that the time will come when our inbred foes, and this is the worst class of foes that thus rise between us and our dear covenant God, when,

"Our inbred foes shall all be slain,  
Nor Satan break our peace again."

Ah, my hearer, all this lies open to the immense survey of a heart-searching God. How then can we boast of nature's goodness? How, therefore, if we sing a song of praise, can it be anything else but "grace, free grace?" So, then these are they that groan within themselves, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." And then, as the Holy Spirit helps us by his word under these infirmities, so also does the Savior. "He that searches the hearts," that is Christ, "knows what is the mind of the Spirit." Christ knows what the Holy Spirit intends concerning us, and he therefore makes intercession for us according to the will of God. Thus you have the Holy Spirit to comfort you, you have Jesus Christ pleading on your behalf his blood and righteousness, and you have the good-will of God; so that having this God on our side, we have hope, and by his grace hope to go on in his ways, and wait until we realize all that he has promised.