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Genesis

Chapter 16 - God's Grace thru Restless Vexation Frustrating Solutions to God's Promises (vs. 1-6)

Genesis 16:1-6: Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight. And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me." But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is

good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

Well, 1 Corinthians 10:13 says,

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man...”

You read Scripture and you go, “I think I can relate to that.” Because we've all felt the same things that everybody has felt. There have been times that we have felt like, “What's taking God so long? I mean, literally, why is He taking so long? He gave me promise.”

You go back to Genesis 12, the promise was pretty clear, “I'm going to make you a great nation. I'm going to bless you. I'm going to make you a blessing.” Of course, at this juncture, Sarah's not feeling it. At this juncture, perhaps Abram's not feeling it. And I think the tendency is to think that “Maybe the delay of these events means that it's not going to happen unless I do something about it.” And if God were before us, we'd probably just say to Him, “Don't

just sit there, do something.” And God says, “We're waiting.” Waiting, I think, is probably one of the hardest things that we'll ever have to do. To wait on the Lord. We know the text. I mean, if you wait on the Lord, you'll renew like wings of eagles. I mean, you'll start flying. But man, waiting. And when He's talking about waiting, it's not just, you know, twiddling your thumbs. It is actually the whole concept of confident expectation. You actually believe that God is going to do something and you put your trust in Him. And when Scripture talks about waiting, once again, it's not being idle.

Psalms 37 makes reference to the fact that we need to delight ourselves in the Lord and cultivate faithfulness and do good. There's a lot of things that we can do. Strangely enough, we end up waiting for that one promise and we stop doing everything. There are things that we could be doing that we aren't, but we're waiting on God, right? And so, it's His fault that we're not doing anything. Wait for God's promises. Trust in His word. That's a hard thing to do. And I think mainly because things haven't turned out oftentimes the way that we think that they

should, in the order that they should. So, you have delay of events. In some circumstances, you have disappointments. You know, once again, things are just not happening the way that they should be.

As we come to this particular passage, the promise was given when Abram was 75 years old. He is now 85 years old, so we're 10 years later. The text will actually make reference to the fact that it's 10 years later.

If you look in Genesis 16:3,

“After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan...”

So, we now know it's 10 years later.

And by the time you come to the end of the chapter in verse 16,

(Genesis 16:16) “Abram was eighty-six years old...”

So, 10 years have gone by. A promise was given. Ten years have gone by. Nothing seems to be happening. And there's a delay of events and there's disappointment of circumstances. And you would have to put in the mix as well, there's a deprivation of desires. More specifically, you have this woman by the name of Sarah, which every

woman desires to have children, or some sense of progeny. Of course, in particular, with the promise that you're going to be a great nation there seems to be this. But we know that you go all the way back to Chapter 11, even before the promise, there was that understanding that Sarah could not have children. Nevertheless, perhaps God would be gracious. I mean, God is God, right? He can do anything He wants to. So, why would He wait 10 years if He's going to do something? And just for your edification and for your understanding, it would not only be 10 years later, it'll be 25 years total that she'll have to wait. Why wait so long? It is in the waiting that we get antsy, we get restless, and there's this sense of vexation. When I think of vexation, I think of being annoyed, I think of being worried. I think of literally being frustrated and exasperated about the things that are happening. And once again, you just feel like, "I guess I'm going to need to roll up my sleeves and take care of this myself, because God obviously is not going to do anything. I mean, He made the promise, but it doesn't seem to be happening." If, in fact, you and I go before the Lord and don't wait on Him, what you're going to find is you're going to start a

domino effect of difficulties and problems that will ultimately crash down upon you. And I think in some way what this passage is going to relate to us is, don't overstep your boundaries. Don't go before God. **Wait for God.**

So, as we come to this, we look at the very beginning of the passage, and it puts us in that context. It puts us in the context of Sarah, Abram's wife. She had borne him no children. Of course, we know that she couldn't have children. So, that's kind of a given, perhaps even axiomatic in the passage. And yet you have 10 years. Ten years you do a lot of thinking. Especially if you feel like God's delaying or disappointed in the circumstances or you feel deprived of something, you do a lot of thinking. And in that thinking, you begin to try to reason through, "Well, maybe we can make this work another way." And so, the passage seems to be demonstrating this sense of Sarah's been thinking, and she says to herself, "You know, I got this maid."

The passage reads this way,

(Genesis 16:1) “Now Sarai, Abram’s wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.”

We’re not sure exactly if that's her name or that which was given to her because the name itself means one who flees, or a stranger, or a wanderer in the land. Of course, she would be a wanderer in this community because she was an Egyptian. And they had sort of picked her up on the way when, if you remember, Abram had gone down to Egypt because there was a famine in the land. So, while he was down there, as Abram goes before the Pharaoh, he tries to pass his wife off as his sister, so he's not hurt in any way in protection. And what he finds out is, as God begins to talk to the Pharaoh, “You don't mess with this family, you don't mess with this woman.” And the Pharaoh ultimately goes, “You need to get out of here, because you're going to bring trouble upon me.” And so, he gives him a lot of stuff. And in giving Abram a lot of stuff, he gives them this maid, one of the many things. In fact, the passage says there were many servants that he gave him. So, she's part of that particular venture. Which

is an interesting point when you consider that they should have never gone down to Egypt. And so, they end up picking up things that they probably should never have. And yet, that's the solution to their problem. Think about that. It's pretty interesting when you think about it. So, she begins thinking, "Well, I have Hagar, I have this woman, and she can probably have children." So, she's thinking through this concept.

And so, it says in verse 2,

(Genesis 16:2) "So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her."
And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai."

He listened to the voice. You notice it doesn't say, "he listened to the words"? He listened to the voice. Probably more accurate translating, he heard the sound. Guys, I just hate to tell you, but when your wife starts crying, you hear the sound. And it's the sound that gets to you. It doesn't matter what she's saying, it's the sound that gets to you and it begins to move you. And she's pulling out all the stops on this one. There are going to be a number of

things within this passage that Sarah does that you're going to say, "Man, I've seen that done a thousand times." But it's the very things that we have to guard ourselves against, and we have to remind ourselves that when things aren't happening the way that we think they should, we have a tendency to then begin to make things happen.

There is a reason for the difficulties in our life. There are times in which we have in our life, and I would call them dry times, I think of the passage in particular in Deuteronomy 8, where God says to the children of Israel, "I let you be hungry. I let you go without." And it's those times that you're going, "I should be eating now." And God goes, "No, we're right on schedule." And your stomach starts growling and difficulties begin to come from that. But God says, "I'm not going to make you starve. But the reason why we're doing this is to see what's on your heart, to see if you really trust Me." Because we lie to ourselves. We say that we really trust God. You go through a little difficulty, some dry times in your life, and you realize, "I don't trust Him at all."

Especially when you're like the Israelites, you start grumbling and complaining over the times. I mean, if you're grumbling and complaining, it's pretty obvious that you're not trusting God. And there are fearful times that come into our life. When you consider that interesting passage in 1 Samuel 13, where you have the king, Saul, and he's supposed to be waiting for Samuel. A text earlier says, "I'll be there in seven days." And so, he goes, and says, "You need to wait for me because I'm going to do the sacrifice. We're going to talk to God at that moment and we're going to find out exactly what God wants." You can just see Saul looking at his watch going, "Seven days, okay." He didn't have a watch. But anyway, so seven days. He needs to be there in seven days. Well, what begins to happen is the Philistines start gathering to attack him. Now, the way I read it, he has about 3,000 men. 2,000 stay with him. Another 1,000 go with his son. So, Jonathan has those, and so, they're kind of separated. And now, he's stuck in a place, and he begins to hear that the Philistines are gathering. They're at Michmash, which is not too far away, probably about 5 miles away from them. And so, he hears the stirring, and from what I

understand, there's 30,000 chariots? Let's see, 2,000 men against 30,000 chariots, 3,000 soldiers in addition to that, and then Scripture then goes on and says, "And he had men without number, like the grains of the sand of the seashore." Okay, you're waiting for some guy to come and tell you, "It's okay," you know, or "This is what we're going to do." And It's getting close to seven days. The passage ultimately unfolds, and now it is seven days. It's seven days to the minute, I'm sure, at that particular moment. And just to kind of add to the problem, the men that's with him, they're hiding. So, they're in the cliffs, they're in the bushes; some of them actually crossed over the Jordan on the other side. So, he's losing his soldiers, and the ones that are with him are shaking. It says they're trembling. And he goes, "Seven days, time's up. I'll go sacrifice." So, he starts playing the number himself, takes it upon himself, "Somebody's got to do something. God's late, right? Somebody's got to do something." So, wouldn't you know, as soon as he starts doing it, Samuel shows up, "Why didn't you wait for me?" That's hard to do when all those pressures are coming on you, when you have fear that's coming upon you, when you have

distressing times and confusing times in your life that are coming upon you. It's hard to wait. God says, "Wait, wait."

Well, Sarah's tired of waiting. She's come up with a plan. And let me just say this, that when you begin to take matters in your own hands, you know that you've just stepped over your boundaries. God told you to wait. You're not waiting. And what I have found is when I take matters in my own hands, a number of things begin to happen. I begin to compromise what I know the right thing is. And in addition to the fact that in that compromise, I begin to invent things that are really hurtful to other people. She's going to involve Hagar, which is not going to be a good scene. And ultimately, within 15 years, it's going to prove to be very problematic, kind of that dominoes effect that begins to happen when you take matters in your own hands. What I think is interesting in the passage is not only does she seem to take matters in her own hands, but she begins to rationalize. Here again, I relate to this. She begins to rationalize her disobedience by playing the victim. You

know, it's one of those moments, "I had to do it." Why did you have to do it? "Well, if it weren't for God being mean to me, I wouldn't have even thought about doing it."

She doesn't exactly put it that way, but the way she puts it is,

(Genesis 16:2) "So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children..."

I mean, immediately she becomes the victim at this juncture. "It's God's fault I don't have any kids." Right? Well, you know, God is sovereign. But why even put that in the mix? I mean, didn't God give a promise? Let's go back to the promise, "I'm going to make you a great nation. I'm going to bless you. I'm going to make you a blessing." And then he just told Abram, "Let's step outside. Let's look at the stars. You see all those stars? These are your kids." So, why not wait? Why try to make it happen? Well, she begins to rationalize her disobedience, and after all, it's the Lord that put her in this tenuous, precarious place. Otherwise, she wouldn't. And here again, it kind of reminds me of James 1, where James goes, "I know you feel like God has pushed you in

this corner, but don't say that God is the one that tempts you to do evil. God doesn't do that. You're tempted and driven by your own lust. That's the reason you're in the situation that you're in. It's your desires that are putting you in this position. Don't blame God for this.” But here again, victim mentality, it makes you look better, and it probably helps you deal with the uncomfortableness of pushing the barriers.

“... the LORD has prevented me from bearing children.
Please go in to my maid...”

I like the way that this whole text, it's very simple wording within the Hebrew; it would simply read something like, “*hinnê nā*”. She starts off going, “*hinnê nā*”. What that phrase is, “Behold, now, look here.” And then she turns to him and she goes, “*Nā' bô*”. “Go in to her. Go, go.” You can hear just the shortness of it, “*Nā' bô*” Well, then the emotions begin to come. She's insisting, “Please go.”

And look at the last phrase here,

“... I will obtain children through her.”

The phrase that's being used, "obtain children," is really about, more specifically, her rescuing herself from a sense of feeling worthless. "I'll have a sense of worth if, in fact, I can have this child through her. She's in my authority. Let's do it this way. I'll become at least somebody. I'll at least become productive in some way." Because the thought was that she's holding back Abram from God's promises. As if somebody could hold anybody back from the promises of God. Yet we start looking around going, "Well, this person kept me from this...." That's that whole victim mentality.

"... I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice..."

Now, verse 3 goes on and says this,

(Genesis 16:3) "After Abram had lived ten years..."

And the Scripture is letting us know that it has been 10 years. I mean, that's a really good argument. And what's also interesting as this begins to unfold is that Sarah not only puts herself in the position of a victim in the sense that it's basically God's fault that all of these problems

began to ensue, but she now begins to, in some way, demonstrate how nice she is in forcing everything.

The way that it reads here in verse 3,

“After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram’s wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.”

“Here.” And you could just feel her, she finally insists, and the way that it reads is, it's like she took her by the hand. You can just see her taking Hagar, “Come on, let's go.” And she comes before Abraham, “Take her. Take her. Somebody's got to pull the cord here. Somebody's got to make it happen.” So, she takes control in this particular setting. If you think about it, I mean, you're just reading it, what a selfless, sacrificial, altruistic, benevolent act, isn't it? I mean, I'm touched. I mean, she's willing to forego herself so that Abraham can become somebody. Isn't it interesting how we convince ourselves? I mean, if you go back, the real problem was that she was feeling insignificant, “But I'm really doing you a favor. I'm really doing everybody a favor by doing this. I'm going to be selfless, and I'm going to take it upon myself to be the

answer to your problems.” Well, surprising to us, Abram actually acquiesces to all of this, and it's a very surprising thing because, of course, this is a man of God. Why would he go along with something like this? Why would he say that it would be okay? I mean, he gives in to Sarah's demands. Why?

I'm going to give you a few reasons why he would do it. And men, just to let you know, there's probably reasons why you cave in to your wife when you shouldn't. The first would be obvious within the text that God has actually left Abram a loophole. Yeah, God left Abraham a loophole.

In fact, if you look back at the very beginning of Chapter 15, you remember when God was basically saying to Abram, “I have this promise and you're going to have children.” And Abram goes, “I don't have any children. How's that going to happen?”

And then God says this in verse 4,

(Genesis 15:4) “Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man...”

Of course, he had already tried to figure out, "It's my servant that's going to have children for me."

He says, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."

Now, that's pretty clear. "It's going to be from you, Abram." But God left the loophole. He didn't put Sarah. So, where there are things that are not clearly defined, that's where our imagination goes wild. Now, the question is, why would God leave a loophole? Why wouldn't God say, "It's going to be from you and Sarah, your wife"? Why wouldn't He say that? Why leave that space? God is constantly wanting us to trust in Him. It's always about our faith in Him. "Why doesn't God just make everything so clear?" If God made everything so clear, you wouldn't trust in Him. You would go according to the pattern. You'd go according to the method. You wouldn't have a relationship with Him. You wouldn't call upon Him. You wouldn't trust in the person. You would trust in the map that He gives you. So, it is God's graciousness that He actually leaves the loophole, but of course, Abram takes it. He takes it.

And the second thing within the passage, and this is a very powerful force that comes into play, is guilt. Guilt. Lest you forget, remember, Abram actually jeopardized his wife's well-being when they went to Egypt. And when he said, "You say you're my sister." Now, he put her in a very highly precarious place in which she might be taken by another man in Egypt. Fundamentally, what he was saying to her, though he did not say it and perhaps did not even feel that he was doing this, what she would have to be picking up is, "You're only valuable if you can protect me, because obviously you can't have children. So, why not make yourself useful here? Your value comes from us protecting this progeny that may come in some way other than you, but we have to protect this at all costs. So, we're going to put you under the bus so that we can be safe." 10 years thinking about stuff like that, it's no wonder she doesn't feel valuable, and that she has to have some means to find worth in this scenario. If, in fact, you were Abram at all, you would feel some sort of guilt over this. And, if your wife is savvy, she knows just the time to throw it on, "This is the time to start moving it and start pushing it and start giving a demand." And she

has, at this juncture, great authority because of guilt. And once again, the great warning is, never, never, never make a decision out of guilt. Do it because it's the right thing to do. You're going to have many times in your life where the past is going to haunt you. And you're going to say, "Well, I really messed up there. I guess it's okay for me to cave on this." And God says, "No, never right to cave. Do the right thing. You did the wrong thing, but don't think by doing a wrong thing again that it's going to somehow make it better."

And then I would say the last thing in the passage is that the disposition of Abram is such that he doesn't like in any way conflict, especially within the family. He doesn't mind fighting for Lot in situations where he's rescuing the family, but he doesn't want conflict in the family. There's an interesting point here, and I kind of reserved this point for this time.

If you go back to Genesis 11, and if you remember, God is actually kind of going through the lineage of Abram. He's going through the lineage of the family, and one of the individuals that is spoken of is his brother, Haran. And

Haran, his brother, dies, before his father, which I'm sure that it's happened before. But there's something that the passage is, I believe, conveying to us that we wouldn't immediately grab onto, but you're going to see the effect on Abram as far as his disposition.

And so, the passage reads this way, if you look with me, (Genesis 11:28) “Haran died in the presence of his father Terah...”

See that? “In the presence of his father Terah.” Why write it in such a way? Now, let me emphasize, the word “presence” there can be translated “presence”. However, the word itself is literally “*pānîm*,” “face”. So, the way that it would read literally is, “Haran died in the face of his father.” That's a very interesting phrase. Now, Scripture is purposely not going into a lot of detail here, but I just want to remind you that term or that phrase is oftentimes used in a place in which there is a dispute or wrath or anger against one another.

I'll give you an example found in Numbers 16:2, where Korah's rebellion came up against Moses, and in they're coming against Moses, it says within the passage,

(Numbers 16:2) “and they rose up before Moses...”

Now, the word “before” is actually “face”. So, the way it would probably read is, “they got in Moses' face.”

And it goes on and says,

(Numbers 16:3) “They assembled together against Moses...”

So, the phrase itself seems to convey something going on, tensions going on. And whether or not there was a taking of life by perhaps a family member or a suicidal moment in which one was getting even, it seems to be something that came about and then ensued as a result of a dispute. Now, the reason why I bring this in is that now you continue to see that Abram takes his brother's son, will take care of him almost to the degree of overcompensating. Whether or not he should have gone, you know, Scripture was pretty clear, I think. God says, “You are to separate from your family,” but Abram just can't leave him. And when he gets kidnapped, he's got to go rescue him. It's got to happen. And when there's problems between him and Lot and his people about the land that they have and they're stepping over, “Please

don't let us argue.” And once again, he overcompensates because quite frankly, Abram gives Lot something that wasn't his to give in the sense of God said, “I want you to have it. This is your land.” He didn't give it to Lot. But Abram takes the property and he goes, “You can have whatever you want in this.” And once again, who does that? Who gives somebody anything they want? And of course, it was probably one of the worst decisions that was ever made on behalf of Lot, because he chooses that realm of Sodom and Gomorrah because he's not looking in terms of what is a godly place or a good place; he's looking in terms of what is a beautiful place and an alluring place. And of course, Sodom and Gomorrah was like paradise at that point. What we have are all kinds of things enterinng into the equation. We have guilt entering into the equation. We have a loophole that's possible there that we can maybe jump through and still not look like we've sinned. And then on top of that, we have our disposition that causes us to think a certain way, and “You know how much I hate us arguing. So, I'll give in.” Think about all those things in the decisions that you make, and how you ultimately end in a place where you go, “Why

did I even make that decision?" But of course, that's really one of the points of the passage, that we find ourselves in a place that we shouldn't be in by virtue of the emotions and the feelings and all the things that come into play, the circumstances, the disappointments of our life, the deprivation of the desires. We feel justified, we have rationalized why we can do these things.

Well, things don't turn out well. I don't know if it's a surprise to you at this juncture, but it says,

(Genesis 16:4) "He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight."

She saw her with contempt, dishonor; she saw her as insignificant. That's a very interesting point. What was Sarah worried about? That she would be seen as insignificant. What happens when she works through the process of her solution? What actually comes out of that? She's seen as more insignificant than ever before.

(Genesis 16:5) "And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong..."

Now, we're talking about wrong. Okay. So, it's not like she didn't know that it was wrong.

“May the wrong done me be upon you...”

In other words, “It's now wrong because I've suffered the consequences of the decision that I've made. Actually, up to that point, it probably wasn't wrong because I didn't suffer any consequences.”

“May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms...”

“Look how nice I was. Look how kind I was. Look how generous, selfless I was.”

“... but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight...”

“What caused that?” I mean, what are you expecting, something good to come out of your sin? It doesn't matter how good you look. You still did the wrong thing.

I love the last phrase in verse 5. Oh, now we're talking about the Lord. Maybe we should have asked the Lord before we got into this, but now... If you think about it,

most of the time in our conversations, we don't bring God in until we want Him to judge somebody. Right?

“... May the LORD judge between you and me.”

Abram, of course, said the manly thing, “None of my business.”

(Genesis 16:6) “... “Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” ...”

So, how does it end?

“... So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence (face).”

Yeah. She mishandled her, humiliated her. Of course, the thought is, “If I'm humiliated before her eyes, I'll humiliate her before my eyes, and we'll be even.

Everything will be okay.” Our solutions just cause more problems. Why wait on God? Because if you don't, you're going to have a domino of problems that just begin to form. What's wonderful about this whole chapter is that God will be gracious to you in spite of yourself, and He'll also be gracious to those who you would never be gracious to. That's an amazing thing. When you read

through the Old Testament, sometimes people say, “God is mean.” Just read. Who's the mean one? Who's mistreating the maid? It's not God. God's going to call on her and He goes, “Hagar, Hagar, where are you going? You don't want to do this.” And God begins to minister to her.

There's an interesting Psalm, Psalm 27, if you turn there with me. It's a reminder to me to wait. You know, Psalm 25, as it comes to the end of Psalm 25, the psalmist begins to talk about his afflictions, and he says,

(Psalm 25:17) “The troubles of my heart are enlarged; Bring me out of my distresses.”

(Psalm 25:18) Look upon my affliction and my trouble, And forgive all my sins.”

There's a realization that the problems, the sorrows, the vexation of your heart, the worries and the irritation and the frustrations that you deal with soon begin to take over and they begin to enlarge themselves. Things begin to multiply. Your anxious thoughts, as the Psalmist will go on to say, are multiplied in you. It seems like the more you think about it, the worse things become, and then on

top of it all, you begin to try to work out a solution. “I'm going to try to fix this thing. God is late. God is not working the way He should be doing. Maybe He's asleep. Maybe He doesn't care. But I need to do something about it.”

Psalms 27 really is about turning to the Lord in these times. And when you consider the first three verses of this Psalms, and not to go into great detail of the Psalm, but it's about fear, it's about dread, it's about things that are overwhelming to you. And the question is, what are you going to do? And of course, he says within the passage, “I'm going to turn to the Lord. I'm going to turn to the Lord. I'm going to be confident in Him. I'm going to turn to Him.”

The way it ends in verse 3,

(Psalm 27:3) “... In spite of this I shall be confident.”

In spite of the fact that fear and dread are overwhelming to him and fear and anxiety is starting to come in, “I'm going to resist.” I mean, what do you do when you feel overwhelmed by fear and dread? Well, you know, psychologists will tell you, you basically go to flight or

fight. So, in the case of Sarah, she went into fight mode. She was going to do something about it. Some people just run away. We run away sometimes emotionally. We run away sometimes physically. We just go, "I'm out of here. I don't like the way things are happening." And you can just hear the word of God going, "Wait. Wait." "I can't wait anymore."

Verses 4 through 6 talks about the fact that we should be, in our waiting, seeking the Lord. And this is a key point, that we need to seek the Lord really above all else.

It says in verse 4,

(Psalm 27:4) "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:

That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life..."

In other words, you need to seek a relationship with God, to be with Him. That's what you need to do. But most of the time, the waiting is all about us being annoyed or worried or anxious and frustrated. Instead of focusing on, "This is an opportunity for me to trust in Him and to meditate or to think about what He wants." Have you

ever thought about that, just during those anxious times, you say, “Why don't I just ask God what He wants?” And you begin to talk to Him.

Verses 7 through 10 just adds a greater difficulty in this scenario. I mean, it's bad enough that you have things that are scary and terrifying in your life, but to have a family abandon you and friends and loved ones?

I mean, if you look at the end of this,

(Psalm 27:10) “For my father and my mother have forsaken me,

But the LORD will take me up.”

The passage is making reference to the fact, of course, that there are going to be times that you feel all alone. You not only feel worthless and insignificant, but it's almost like you have affirmation of that by the people around you, the very people that should be encouraging you. And I think in many respects, this is the kindness of God that is bringing us to put our complete trust in Him. As I've oftentimes talked about, David in the Old Testament, and I mean, this is a guy that really wanted to please people. He wanted to please his father. He was

going to be faithful and take care of the sheep even when his brothers are away, and he was going to be there. He was going to do this. But he never has the affirmation from his father, never has the affirmation from his brothers, as they'll basically look at him like a showboat and look down upon him even as they're fighting with the Philistines. He will ultimately find a position. His whole desire is that he's going to please the king. The king will never be pleased with him. The king will want him dead. And he'll marry this wife that is the king's daughter, and certainly he'll become somebody through that, and she just mocks him. Almost everybody that he turns to that he wants to please, that he wants to like him back, do just the opposite. But as you read the Psalms, you begin to understand why. Because God was actually bringing in him to the point of wholly trusting in Him and only wanting to please God. And it is exactly what comes out of the pages of Psalms.

What's interesting to me in this passage, and one of the main reasons why I wanted you to look at this Psalm 27, is

the cry in verse 11, and I want you to pick up with me in the passage.

The cry is,

(Psalm 27:11) “Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a level path...”

In other words, “Keep me from tripping up. Keep me from stumbling. Keep me from falling. I've got to be in a level path here.”

Now, the question is, how is he going to fall? What is it that's going to trip him up? And if you look in verse 12, it reads,

(Psalm 27:12) “Do not deliver me over to the desire of my
adversaries...”

Actually, the word there, and I think you have translated off to the side, is the “soul of my adversaries”. In a way, what he's saying within the passage is, “Don't let them breathe on me, because I might catch their soul.”

And the reason why I say that is, if you look at the passage,

“Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries,
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.”

What is he talking about within the passage? He's already dealt with the fears in verses 1 through 3, but what he's dealing with in verses 11 and 12 is the tendency of those that are his enemies to get him to fight the same way they fight. And that is in the realm of vindictiveness, taking your stand. I mean, taking control of things. “You can't tell me what to do.” God puts you in this corner, and now you're the victim, and now, “Well, I'm going to stand up to him. I'm going to fight back.” And you find yourself catching the breath of violence. You actually begin to catch the breath of violence. You begin to breathe the same air they breathe. “Don't let me be like them. Don't let the spirit of violence come upon me.”

The way that this Psalm ends is very encouraging.

It reads this way, if you read with me,

(Psalm 27:13) “I would have despaired unless I had
believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD...”

(Psalm 27:14) “Wait for the LORD;
Be strong and let your heart take courage;
Yes, wait for the LORD.”

Can you wait? Yeah, you and I need to wait, because what's going to happen in the waiting is that the relationship is going to grow stronger. God is actually purging you of these thoughts that you have. You say that you trust Him. Well, only time will tell. And God is gracious to let us work through those times. But I can tell you this, that you have to go through it in order to see. And let me also say this, if you will wait, you will see the goodness. There have been times I haven't waited, and wow, did I make a mess of my life.

I remember a while back, just by way of practicality, I was in California, and I had a business, and some of the companies that we had done work for were not paying. They were very big companies, but they just decided they weren't going to pay. And so, I owed some of my workers money, and I didn't know how that was going to happen. And I read this page, isn't it something how certain things just pop up? The loopholes. And so, I was reading the

paper, and one of the loopholes in the paper was there was this organization that did bill consolidation. And they gave examples of: you're making these payments, and your payments can be so much lower. So, hey, from God, right? So, I remember calling them up, and as we began talking, they said, "Yeah. We can actually reduce your debt." I said, "How are you going to reduce my debt?" He says, "No, we'll talk to the people that you owe, and we'll reduce your debt." And I said, "What do you mean?" And they said, "Well, you know, if you owe, say, 100%, maybe we can reduce it down to 40%, and that's all you'll have to pay." And I said, "So, what you're saying is, I'm not paying off my debt?" He says, "I guess you could say that." I said, "I can't do that." I said, "I signed, and I promised to pay. I have to pay off my debt." He couldn't understand why, but you think of those things that are made available to you, and they're loopholes. They're loopholes. And we go, "This is the answer." And then we take things in our own power, and we begin to take control. And I mean, after all, it was God that put me in that position, right? God is the one that did it. And I'm going to look altruistic. I'm going to pay my people. I'm going to get them paid. Well,

we didn't take it, but the Lord still met our needs. It took some waiting, and the waiting is not very comfortable. But it can be, if you do trust Him.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word, and just the reminders of these things that come into our life. We realize that there are things that are drawing us away from the level place. We find ourselves tripping, stumbling, but lead us back to that level place. Lead us back to that place in which we put our trust in You, which we wait on You. We remain in integrity. We don't compromise, and we don't try to figure out things and try to make things happen and try to push things into the place where we think they need to be. Lord, bring us back.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, what we're asking you to do is just examine your life. And what we're asking you to do is walk righteously. I mean, Christ has died for your sins so that you might live unto righteousness, to walk in integrity, to walk in faith,

trusting Him, that He's going to work on your behalf. It certainly doesn't mean that He wants you sitting around doing nothing. Scripture says, work hard with your hands so that you're not in any need. It says to cultivate faithfulness and do good. But what Scripture is talking about is waiting for the solution to come from Him, not you.