

The God Who Waits **Isaiah 30:15-18**

Recently I have been thinking about God's promise in Isaiah 30:15-18. As they faced the Assyrian armies, God called on Israel to trust in His strength. He urged them to trust in His salvation. God said,

*In returning and rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.*

What a wonderful promise! Return and rest in me, and I will save you. Be quiet and trust me, and I will give you strength. How could anyone reject such a powerful promise?

Sadly – almost unbelievably - Israel refused to trust God. Instead, Israel trusted in her horses and chariots.

But you were unwilling, and you said, "No! We will flee upon horses"; therefore you shall flee away; and, "We will ride upon swift steeds"; therefore your pursuers shall be swift.

God warned that because Israel refused to wait for Him, they would "flee away." Instead of chasing the Assyrians, they would run from the Assyrians.

As I reflect on the tragedy of Israel's missed opportunity, I see that my worst failures have been when I have failed to wait on God: when I have moved forward in my own timing, when I have attempted to resolve situations in my own wisdom, and when I have tried to solve God-sized problems in my limited human strength. When I do not wait on God, I fail. That is the painful reality of Isaiah 30:15-16.

But this week, I reread Isaiah 30 and saw an encouragement that I missed last time. Yes, Israel would suffer the results of her refusal to trust God. Yes, judgment would come. Yes, a thousand Israelite soldiers would run from one Assyrian soldier (Isa 30:17).

But Isaiah's message does not end with judgment. Instead, verse 18 continues with a glorious promise. God said that even though Israel did not "wait for Him," He was waiting for them!

*Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.*

Though Israel would not wait for God, God continued to wait for Israel. Though Israel did not deserve mercy, God was exalted by showing compassion to an undeserving nation.

This stands out to me because as a teacher, I can be impatient. If a student refuses to follow my advice, I am tempted to say, "You won't listen to me? Fine - you are on your own. Figure it out yourself!"

But God isn't like that; He is the God who waits. When we try to do it in our own power, He waits to be gracious to us. He picks us up when we fall. He re-teaches the lesson we refused to learn. He shows mercy when we do not deserve it. Rejoice with me in the "God who waits."