

# UNTIL

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Leon Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary wrote in his *Diary in Exile*: “Life is not an easy matter. . . . You cannot live through it without falling into frustration and cynicism unless you have before you a great idea which raises you above personal misery, above weakness, above all kinds of perfidy and baseness.”

I am speaking to you today about such a great idea...a noble, uplifting thought: ***Destiny!***

The purpose of God for your life...

The experience of God’s purpose in your life...

God created time and space. Space is subject to examination, it is measurable, and to some extent quantifiable. In the natural creation that surrounds us we may see the imprint of God’s hands. We acknowledge that He created all things. But time...

Time is certainly measurable, but much less easy to examine. Time embraces so many variables, that it is often difficult to follow the thread of God’s plan. That’s one of the beauties of the Bible. The Scriptures trace God’s purpose through lifetimes and over centuries and millennia, weeding out the unrelated bulk of detail. It is a select record that capsulates God’s plan.

However, that very blessing of time-lapse recording only seems to apply to snatches and glimpses of our own lives, which are chock full of that bulk of experience that is only distantly related to God’s plan for our lives. Days pass too slowly, while years fly by too quickly. We often run when we should wait, and just as often hesitate when we should leap. We moan, “Why does it take *so long?*” and then cry out, “How did it happen *so quickly?*”

I have found in the Bible a key word. A key that unlocks the mysteries of time. A key that leads to God’s plan for your life — your destiny! Come with me...let’s examine that wonderful little word, that huge little word...**UNTIL**.

“Until” means “up to the time of” or “to the extent of.”

For instance, Paul uses the term “fullness of time” to express the accomplishment of “until”:

Galatians 4

<sup>4</sup> *But when the **fullness of the time** had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,* <sup>5</sup> *to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

“Until” implies an unreadiness in the nature of things that can only be resolved over the course of time.

An apple begins as a seed, which must be buried, and germinate, and mature, and flower, and be pollinated, and ripen. All of that is contained in the seed, but requires time to unlock its sweetness.

A person is conceived, and must grow in the womb, and be delivered, and nurtured, and educated, and mature. But who could know if that fetus would become an Albert Einstein or a Billy Graham, or a Bill Gates? Only time can reveal it!

While we wait for the necessary time to pass and the accompanying circumstances to fall into proper juxtaposition, this is what we call “**until**”.

The Bible indicates two sides of “until”—God’s side and ours. That is, what *God* is waiting for, and, on the other side, what *we* are waiting for. First, let’s focus on God’s side.

### God’s “Until”

There are numerous examples of God’s “until.” Each expresses a divine purpose which must develop and reach maturity. Here are just a few:

#### Isaiah 32

<sup>13</sup> *On the land of my people will come up thorns and briers, yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city;* <sup>14</sup> *Because the palaces will be forsaken, the bustling city will be deserted. The forts and towers will become lairs forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks--* <sup>15</sup> **Until** *the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest.*

The Spirit’s arrival to renew and restore assumes a period of corruption and collapse has created a desperate need, and the pent up cry of God’s people unleashes His restoration.

#### Jeremiah 27

<sup>22</sup> *'They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be **until** the day that I visit them,' says the LORD. 'Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.'*

Wars and rumors of war are encompassed by Daniel’s vision of a ferocious spiritual beast that oppresses God’s people:

#### Daniel 7

<sup>19</sup> *"Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet;* <sup>20</sup> *"and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows.* <sup>21</sup> *"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,* <sup>22</sup> **"until** *the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.*

“Until... the time came.” History accumulates as time passes, all waiting for God’s “fullness of time.”

#### Matthew 24

<sup>38</sup> *"For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, **until** the day that Noah entered the ark,* <sup>39</sup> *"and did not know b the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

#### Romans 11

<sup>25</sup> *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel **until** the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

## 2 Thessalonians 2

<sup>7</sup> *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains (referring to the Holy Spirit) will do so **until** He is taken out of the way.* <sup>8</sup> *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.*

I believe God's side is summed up in Psalm 105: <sup>19</sup> ***“Until the time that His word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him.”***

Joseph had dreams. He did not create those dreams, God gave them to him. Nor did he have power to fulfill them, he could only wait for God to work. In the meantime, Joseph endured significant difficulties, while retaining his confidence in God.

Joseph's trials, like our own, were predicated upon God's dream and promise for his life. His character, like ours, was forged in the fires of patient and faithful waiting for the dream to materialize — “not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the LORD.”

We all hope for a better traffic flow through San Rafael, but with all the freeway construction taking place these days, you've probably experienced extra traffic jams, especially when one lane is closed for construction equipment and traffic must alternate in passing — first one direction, then the other.

A veteran operator of one of those big machines tried to relieve the tension that inevitably results from such a traffic backup. On both the front and rear of his grader he hung signs, reading, “The Road to Happiness is Almost Always Under Construction.” What an astute observation!

God is always at work in us — forgiving, cleansing, renewing, maturing — because He has a goal in mind: that we should be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus. That's His aim, and His perspective. What is yours?

### **Another “Until”**

All around us, Creation gives knowledge of the might and glory of God, who made all things.  
Psalm 19

<sup>1</sup> *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.*

More powerful microscopes peel back the layers of what we know to reveal even greater depths of the wisdom of God, inspiring our faith. At the same time, more powerful telescopes peer into the vaster reaches of space to discover still greater expressions of God's majesty, reviving our awe and wonder.

However, in this material world, time is also a creature of God; the fourth dimension, if you will, in which all things exist and have their lives. Even inanimate minerals have a measurable lifetime!

We can measure time by fractions of a second, and by days and years, but it is not so easy to perceive as it passes (Have you ever stared at a clock to try to detect the movement of its hands?). We don't notice the gradual changes in ourselves until someone remarks, “Wow! You've really changed!”

And we too seldom appreciate time for the gift that it is. We can trace its passing, but we cannot fathom its purposes. Yet time is God's servant, and the headmaster of our school of life. Everything God does comes to pass in the “fullness of time.”

## Ephesians 1

<sup>10</sup> *That in the dispensation of the **fullness of the times** [God] might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him.*

Everything that God has created has a destiny, a fullness of time for its intended purpose — including you. You have a destiny to which God will lead, if only you will follow, but you cannot know it fully from where you sit. You can only get at it *over the course of time*, yet you must follow *now*, by faith. Your eternal purpose in relationship to God is shrouded by time.

## 1 Corinthians 13

<sup>12</sup> *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*

God sent us His Word, veiled in flesh.

## John 1

<sup>14</sup> *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus is the Word of God incarnate — in human form.

And during His absence God has given us the *written* Word to reveal His eternal purpose in Jesus Christ, and to guide our steps throughout our “until.” He has invested Himself — His power — in His Word, and said,

## Isaiah 55

<sup>11</sup> *So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty [or fruitless], but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

The Bible key that unlocks the mysteries of time is that wonderful little word, that huge little word... until, which describes the unreadiness in the nature of things that can only be resolved over the course of **time**. While we wait for the necessary time to pass and the accompanying circumstances to be moved into their proper relationship to each other, it is “**until**”.

Someone has said, “The secret of patience is doing something else in the meanwhile.” Perhaps even better said, it is doing something *with* the meanwhile.

### *The Oyster*

*There once was an oyster whose story I tell,  
Who found that sand had got under his shell,  
Just one little grain, but it gave him much pain,  
For oysters have feelings although they're so plain.  
Now, did he berate the working of Fate,  
Which had led him to such a deplorable state?  
Did he curse out the government, call for an election?  
No; as he lay on the shelf he said to himself  
"If I cannot remove it, I'll try to improve it."  
So the years rolled by as the years always do,  
And he came to his ultimate destiny—stew.  
And this small grain of sand which had bothered him so,*

*Was a beautiful pearl, all richly aglow.  
Now this tale has a moral—for isn't it grand  
What an oyster can do with a morsel of sand;  
What couldn't we do if we'd only begin  
With all of the things that get under our skin.*

It is written that “a pearl is a garment of patience that enclosed an annoyance.” How many “pearls” have you developed during your lifetime?

## Our “Until”

Of course, you and I have a different perspective than God, for we are unable to see “the end from the beginning,” as He is. We sometimes speak of a “trial by fire,” but more often what we experience is a “trial by time.”

Hosea 10

<sup>12</sup> *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, **until** He comes and rains righteousness on you.*

To reach your destiny requires self-discipline and persistent devotion. And these require the powerful assist of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 24

<sup>49</sup> *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem **until** you are endued with power from on high."*

Our side of “until” also requires waiting for God to do what only He can do.

When a field worker discovered weeds growing among the grain, he asked the farmer if he wanted him to pull the weeds from the ground. But the farmer said,

Matthew 13

<sup>29</sup> *"No, you'll uproot the wheat if you do. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together **until** the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn."*

Jesus was very clear about the necessity of faithful waiting:

Matthew 24

<sup>13</sup> *The one who endures to the end will be saved.*

In their moving book, [In His Image](#), Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey describe the problems that people who have been blind from birth have when they can suddenly see. Basic notions of space, motion, and shape are incomprehensible at first. It may require up to four weeks of training for these people to learn to distinguish between round, square, and triangular shapes. One patient mistook an apple for a key, a loaf of bread for a hand. Another, grasping for some clue to please her teacher, seized on color. She learned that a match box was yellow; from then on she called every yellow object a match box, whether it was an apple, a banana, or a book jacket.

If it takes time for a newly sighted person to adjust his or her vision, then the same process is possible for those who have suddenly gained their spiritual sight. It takes time for spiritual maturity.

Our side of “until” is summarized in two passages. The first is:

Psalm 73

<sup>16</sup> *When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me — <sup>17</sup> **until** I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.*

Until... until I... until I went... until I went into the sanctuary of God.

The sanctuary is where we make a place to meet with God and listen for His voice.

Psalm 132

<sup>4</sup> *I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, <sup>5</sup> **Until** I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."*

You see, making the place is vital, but it's only a start, and it will be a fruitless start if we don't wait until we hear from Him.

Psalm 123

<sup>2</sup> *Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, **until** He has mercy on us.*

The second verse that summarizes our side is:

Luke 19

<sup>13</sup> *"So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business **until** I come.'*

It is time to do business for the Lord. He is working in us, and we should be working for Him. When Jesus left us here, He also left chosen, gifted people to carry on His work:

Ephesians 4

<sup>11</sup> *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> **until** we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

How long do we keep doing this? Until we *all* come to maturity. This is the process by which we grow up.

Until we enter the “sanctuary of God” — regularly and earnestly seeking His face — we cannot understand what God is doing in our lives and around us; and without that understanding, we'll lack the drive to focus on *His* business and obey His calling in every kind of “weather.”

The American poet, W. H. Auden wrote: “Perhaps there is only one cardinal sin: impatience. Because of impatience we were driven out of Paradise, because of impatience we cannot return.”

“Let patience complete its work,” the apostle urged, “so you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:4)

Let us devotedly persist in following Christ,  
***until*** He appears. It may be this year. In one sense, it *must* be this year! We must experience His wonderful presence and the effects of His power in our lives, and take them to our community. *We must!*

Let us love His appearing. Let us seek His appearing in the sanctuary. Let us pray and let us work, while God does the work for us that *only He* can do!