

Purpose of Delay

#0110

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—December 29, 1978

My subject tonight has been impressed upon my mind for a while—the subject of delay. The kind of delay I want to study with you is the kind we were experiencing at the train tracks this noon. I'm not talking about the delays that are caused by our laziness or stupidity or selfishness or lack of attention to duty; we have those sometimes. I'm talking about the delays like waiting for the train when there's nothing you can do about it. There's nothing you did that *made* the problem; there's nothing you *can* do that will *change* the problem.

Why does God allow those delays? There are times when there is no way to explain the reason for why God permits delay, but we know that all things work together to them that love God. So I share with you some of the reasons why God permits delay and some of His purposes. For everything God does, and everything He allows His children to experience, has a significant purpose, an important purpose.

God plans each life as though that were all He had to do for eternity. More than that, He plans each day with infinite concern and care. No sparrow falls to the ground without Him. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. God has a special work for each one, a special place. And it is a wonderful thing to know that we are at the right place at the right time with the right word to the right man.

Why the delays then? First of all, to develop patience. James, the first chapter, verses 2–4. I invite you to turn to the Scripture that we may hear the Word of the Lord. I'm so glad, dear friends, that we can hear what God says instead of just listening to the echoes of worldly philosophy.

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing”
James 1:2–4.

The word 'temptations' means trials or tests of any kind. How can we count temptation a joy? If there's anything that develops patience, it's delay. It develops patience unless it develops impatience. It can do either one, can't it? Yes.

Delays are interesting in that they call for patience. But they also cause patience to grow. Delays are like challenges that we meet to use our physical muscles. In order to lift a weight or open a door or do any other work, we have to have some muscle.

Every time we use that muscle, it grows; it's stronger. So it is with patience. Patience, as it meets delay, finds it has a chance to be used. We must have patience in order to handle delay. Every time we go through a delay patiently, we have *more* patience. Our patience is better; it's working, and we *need* patience.

James, the fifth chapter. James apparently was quite impressed with this subject of patience. He speaks of it more than once in his little book. He's writing to those who are expecting the coming of the Lord. Any of them here tonight? I hope you all are; it's a blessed hope, isn't it?

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” James 5:7–8.

James points us to the agricultural operations to teach us the lesson of patience. And what a lesson these things in nature are! The farmer sows his seed. There comes a time when there is nothing more he can do except wait for the rain, wait for the sunshine, wait for the growth. Now, there are some things that he can do. Occasionally, he can stir the earth; he can keep out the weeds. But he doesn't spend 24 hours a day out there with the plants. No farmer does that. He does what he can and then he has to wait. He has to have patience. This is a lesson for us.

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door”
James 5:9.

Don't blame others. When we run into a delay, we are tempted to find someone to blame. Why? Why? Why?

I was thinking of Saul who was waiting for Samuel. He was getting ready to go into battle. Samuel told Saul he would come down and meet him, so Saul waited seven days. He got more impatient all the time. And finally, the time came when the waiting time was expired, as far as Saul was concerned. So, there with his armor on, he took some priestly vestments and put them on him (something he had no right at all to do), and made an offering.

Then here came Samuel. He was late on that occasion. But he was late in God's order; he was on time as far as God's clock was concerned. But not according to Saul. When Samuel reproved him, Saul defended himself. He said The Philistines were gathered together, and I saw that I had to go to battle, and I didn't want to go without a burnt offering, so I forced myself and did it. Samuel said, You've done foolishly. The Lord can't use you as king. He failed on this test. He could not experience delay without becoming impatient. That led him to disobedience.

Oh, my friends. I want to learn to wait patiently for the Lord and not blame others.

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” James 5:10–11.

A whole book in the Bible is devoted to the patience of one man, Job. The 144,000 will go through similar experiences when, without being able to understand, they are forced to wait—crying to God, longing for deliverance, not knowing how long it will be. We are told that the very delay is essential to their development and is the best answer to their petitions. That’s *Great Controversy*, page 631. The very delay so painful to them is the best answer to their petitions.

It’s wonderful how Job, in spite of the fact that he was down in the depths of despair, rose to the height of expressing his confidence in God.

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” Job 13:15.

“He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” Job 23:10.

So, delays are Heaven's laboratories in which patience is developed.

Another precious lesson which "delays" gives us is an opportunity to learn a deeper experience in being true to God, developing loyal, and manifesting obedience. God has often designed experiences with this in mind. When the Israelites were going to meet the enemy at Jericho, God arranged it that they would need to, in obedience to His commands, go around Jericho one time then go home. The next day they were to march around the city again, and again go back. That kept on for seven days. And the seventh day they were to go around how many times? Seven times. During that whole time, the people were to be silent. Then at the signal, after the seventh time, they were to shout. And what would happen? The wall fell. But day after day, they had to do something that apparently wasn't accomplishing a thing. Faith and obedience were developed as they kept marching around the city. It’s a wonderful thing during a time of delay to just keep doing what God told us to do.

Someone was telling me an experience that interested me very much. There was a man who was on the way to his office. His little son was going with him. After breakfast, the father went down and walked across the bridge. After crossing the bridge, he happened to think of something he wanted, and went across the street to the cigar store. This man was not a Christian but a man of the world. He said to his boy, Tommy,

“Wait right here. Daddy has got an errand to do across the street. You wait right here till I come back.”

So Tommy waited. The man went on to the cigar store where he knew the people. He got to talking to some friends, and forgot all about Tommy, and went on his way to his office. He spent his time in his office as usual and then went home. When he came through the door for lunch, his wife asked: “Where’s Tommy?”

“Oh! Tommy!” Where was Tommy? So he went down there, and where do you suppose Tommy was? Right where he left him.

It was interesting when Tommy told his experience. A kind lady had offered to take him to her home and try to locate his folks. “No, Daddy told me to wait right here till he came.” Some boys came along and tried to get him to play with them in the park. “No, Daddy told me to wait right here.” There he was, a brave little fellow. Delay, unexpected delay, unexplained delay had not shaken his loyalty and his obedience. I say that’s wonderful. And bless the Lord, every one of us can be God’s little boys and little girls. What do you say?

It’s going to be wonderful when we see Jesus coming in the cloud and say, “This is the Lord. We have waited for Him.” Yes, delays develop obedience—the obedience of confidence in God and loyalty to His commandments.

Delay also gives us the precious opportunity to develop faith and trust. We have the example of Abraham. What a man of faith he was. God gave him in his old age the promise of a son. He and Sarah were past the age of childbearing, but he believed. His faith faltered for a while. He and Sarah contrived another plan of taking Hagar, but the Lord never accepted that. And Ishmael was not the one that God had promised. And finally, thank God, Abraham came to the full experience of complete faith.

“And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise” Hebrews 6:15.

For years, he waited for that son of promise to be born. Did it happen? Yes. Isaac, the child of promise, was born. And Paul says that it was through faith that it happened—Abraham’s faith, Sarah’s faith, all entered into that miraculous birth. Faith and trust were evidence that they met delay over the years, but the faith grew as it was expressed and as it was evident and manifest.

Notice God’s desire for us:

“And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” Hebrews 6:11–12.

How do we inherit the promises? Through faith and patience. All of these wonderful traits are developed as we meet delay.

I don't suppose there is any danger of us getting so pleased with this study that we hunt up all the possible tests and trials. I don't think we need to. But at least the year that has passed has given us some tests and trials along this line, and the year that's soon to come will have some more, and every one of them is an opportunity.

Speaking of the time of trouble ahead:

“The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint, though severely tried” *Great Controversy*, page 621.

Whichever one you're going through is the hardest. Whether it's weariness or delay or hunger, when you get them all together, that's something. The remnant will go through these experiences. Think of Joseph there in the dungeon. Under false accusation, he was put in prison. After one year, his hopes are aroused as he's given the opportunity to interpret the dreams of two prisoners. One was to be restored to his position with the king. And Joseph asked him to speak a word for him. The chief butler was sure he would do it. But he forgot about it. For two years, he forgot about it—the man who had encouraged him and interpreted his dream and foretold his getting out of prison. But this was in the providence of God. But Joseph didn't know how long it would be.

I have tried to picture Joseph there in that prison, waiting. I suppose the very first day that the chief butler got back to Pharaoh, Joseph began to think, I wonder when he's going to call for me; I wonder when I'm going to get out. But a day passed, and another day, and a week, and a month, and a year, and no hope except the hope of trusting God. Not one thing happened to encourage him. He didn't know how long that delay would continue. But at the right time, the Lord turned things around. The chief butler, hearing Pharaoh's dream, said, I do remember my faults this day. There's a man down there in the prison who can interpret dreams. He interpreted mine; it came out just like he said. Pharaoh said, Get him. Get him up here. All my wise men have failed. Get him up here! And the delay was over. Joseph had developed patience. He had developed loyalty; he had developed faith and trust in God.

A season is ahead of us. The time of Jacob's trouble is a time when we must have a faith that can endure weariness and delay and hunger: “a faith that will not faint though severely tried.”

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus”
Revelation 14:12.

Is the patience here? Is the obedience to God's commandments here? Is keeping the faith of Jesus here? Yes, all three. If it takes delays to develop patience; if it takes delays to develop the habit, the fixed habit, of obedience under all circumstances; if it takes delay to develop this simple faith and trust, and the remnant have all three of these traits; do you think we might major in delays? We don't have to *hunt* for them. We certainly don't need to manufacture them. But when God in His providence allows them, whether it's a simple thing like waiting for a train at the crossing, or some major experience in life where we think, Oh, we must have the answer, thank God for these precious lessons. What do you say?

O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe;
That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But in the hour of grief and pain
Can lean upon its God.
A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempest rages without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt.
Lord give me such a faith as this,
And then whate'er may come,
I'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.
~William H. Bathurst, 1796–1877

There is one more blessing that comes through these experiences of delay. In the book *Christ's Object Lessons*, I read a significant statement:

“Often He delays to answer us in order to try our faith or test the genuineness of our desire” *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 145.

Do you really want something?

“Oh yes, I want it.”

How *much* do you want it?

“Oh, I want it ever so much.”

Can you endure delay?

As I look down the halls of memory, something comes I hadn't thought of in a long time. I was a little eight-year-old boy. The newspaper in Phoenix was giving out

red caps to boys. All they had to do was come down there. There was a friend of my father that happened to be at our house that day, and he had an automobile. We were poor; we didn't have an automobile. He said, "If you wish, I'll take the boys down, and they can get those red caps." How do you suppose that sounded to an eight-year-old boy? Ah, my, to get a red cap. And we were poor. Whether we were poor or rich, to get a red cap is something.

Well, he took us down there, and there was a mob of boys waiting. How long do you suppose we waited? Until we got the cap. We wanted it.

God knows that when you want something very much and pray for it and wait, one of two things happens. You will either cool off and quit praying, and quit wanting it as much, or else your desire *increases*. Since the satisfaction of the desire is one of the great joys of life, God allows us to get hungry before He feeds us sometimes, so that we'll enjoy the meal more. He allows delays in answer to our prayers so we may get a greater joy than we otherwise would.

I remember several years ago when my wife and I were preparing to adopt a little girl. We thought it would only be a matter of a few weeks. We knew what we wanted, and we didn't see why it took so long. But there were all kinds of technicalities and legal red tape and other things. So the weeks went by. Month after month went by. When we finally got her, we wanted her a lot more than we did to start with. The desire had increased with every week of delay.

So when you pray for something, and there seems to be a delay, remember God may be giving you the best answer to your petition while waiting because your desire can increase.

"We must show a firm, undeviating trust in God. Often He delays to answer us in order to try our faith or test the genuineness of our desire... The persistent asking brings the petitioner into a more earnest attitude, and gives him an increased desire to receive the things for which he asks" *Ibid*.

Do you know the remnant church is going to long for the coming of Jesus, increasingly as we near the end? Do you remember the picture in Revelation 14? The 14th verse pictures Jesus coming on the cloud, and then in the 15th verse, a voice of an angel (and I believe that this voice represents the prayers of the people of God) says to that one on the cloud:

"Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe" Revelation 14:15.

As the righteous long for the coming of Jesus, as they see the wickedness of the world increasing (and isn't it increasing?), the last prayer recorded in the Bible will be echoed and re-echoed by the children of God:

“...Even so, come, Lord Jesus” Revelation 22:20.

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” Hebrews 9:28.

The Psalmist says:

“I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning” Psalm 130:5–6.

So learning these lessons of patience, of loyalty manifest in obedience, of faith and trust we receive day by day an increase of desire, longing not only for the answer to the prayers which concern us today but we’re praying for the ultimate goal of it all—the end of sin and the coming of our Lord.

“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” James 5:8.

Someone says, “But oh! I want to do something while I’m waiting.”

Amen. As my dear friend, Elder Luther Warren, said, “When you don't know what to do, then you know just what to do. That is to pray and wait on God.”

“...Prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock Heaven's storehouse where are stored the boundless resources of omnipotence” (*Steps to Christ*, page 94). It is through prayer that we learn how to meet our delays. It is through prayer that we occupy our time in the delays. So that, instead of becoming restless and fretful, we become trustful and restful.

Prayer, prayer, prayer. This is something we can always do. Joseph did it in the dungeon. Job did it on the ash heap. Jesus did it in Gethsemane. And the remnant will learn the lesson to its fullest in the time of Jacob's trouble. We need to learn all we can in anticipation of that great crowning struggle.

Dear ones, we serve a wonderful God, don't we? Will the congregation kneel with us as we pray?

Our Father in Heaven, we thank Thee for the invitation to come with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We join with these that have come to thine altar tonight with these burdens upon their hearts. Grant them Thy peace, Thy rest, and the assurance that Thou art hearing their requests. Oh, we thank Thee that Jesus takes our poor prayers upon His lips, that He

lifts His wounded hands and prays for us and with us. And we believe that His prayers are heard. And Father, all through this congregation are others whose hearts are longing for a blessing. I pray that Thou wilt refresh every weary one, feed every hungry soul, grant that this Sabbath shall be indeed the greatest Sabbath of our lives. Dismiss us with Thy blessing, and give each one the presence of Christ. For His sake, amen.

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