

Why God Waits to Answer

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Day One

Have you ever said: "Lord, it's enough! When are you going to do something about this? Why are you waiting so long?" Well, I don't know anyone who hasn't asked those questions of God at some time or another in their Christian walk. I certainly have.

When it looks as though God has waited too long to answer your prayers, you need to stop and realize his purposes may be quite different from yours. Frequently before he responds to your need, he is adjusting you to the trouble and helping you learn a much-needed lesson. Maybe he wants to teach you that you can face and endure trouble as long as he is with you in the trouble. Then he will take you out of it. But it will not happen until you have stopped being restless and fretful about it. He may be waiting for you to be calm and quiet. Then he can say, "It is enough."

Paul Billheimer wrote in *Adventures in Adversity*: "There can be no testing of character without delays...By this means, during delay, God is testing and developing character. It is easy to be impatient with God when we fail to understand the purpose of his delay. However, God is willing to be misunderstood in the universe he has made, in order to achieve his purpose of character development."¹

I recall a three-year delay God gave me, when I so wanted to leave a job I was in. And if I had left when I wanted to, I would have missed three years of personal development that have been essential to my walk with God and the ministry he has given me. The tough lessons I learned then molded my character and prepared me for what was ahead.

When it was finally over, I wrote in my journal: "I praise you it is now enough. My time in this job is over, but I praise you did not end it until you had completed your work in me." It's easy to say that at the end, but difficult to say it in the middle, isn't it?

If you're in that predicament today, wondering why God hasn't done anything yet, try to remember the day will come when you can look back and see how he was developing you in that time. Someday he'll say to you, "It is enough now." Until then, keep trusting and believing he waits so he can be gracious unto you.

Day Two

Are you feeling anxious about something today? Are you very disturbed over a situation in your life? Does it seem impossible to find any rest and peace right now? Recently a passage in Isaiah 48 gave me some insight into the reasons behind the anxiety and unrest I was experiencing.

This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid

¹ Billheimer, P. (1984). *Adventure in Adversity*. Tyndale House Publishers.

attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea (Isaiah 48:17-18).

How incisively the Word of God cuts through and exposes the real issues. I was reminded anxiety and unrest are often a result of my failure to pay attention to what I know about God. Rarely do I need some new truth or principle to help me out; I just need to practice what I know already.

I find I rarely make a deliberate decision to wander from God's principles. It's simply a failure to pay attention to what I know already. My focus becomes fractured. I move slightly off-center, simply because I haven't paid attention like I should.

And when that happens, the results are loss of peace, loss of rest, anxiety, frustration. When you start to dig underneath those outward effects, you often discover the cause is failure to pay attention to God's commands. It may be something that seems very small, but if we walk away from doing it God's way, we can expect to lose the peace and rest we so need.

The Lord told his people, *if only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river (Isaiah 48:18).*

If you're missing peace in your life today, check out the obedience department and see if there's some area where you're not paying attention to God. Once you get that straightened out, that wonderful, marvelous, indescribable peace will return, like a river, flooding your heart and calming your nerves.

Day Three

Sometimes I feel like I take three spiritual steps forward and five backward. Do you get that same feeling? Sometimes it just looks like I'll never make real progress, and I'm frequently so very disappointed in myself.

It's bad enough other people let us down all the time, but it's really difficult when we disappoint ourselves. Just recently I lost my patience with someone and raised my voice in anger. And a few minutes later as I calmed down and realized what I'd done, I just couldn't believe I had allowed that to happen. I was so disappointed in myself. With all I know and all I teach to others, how could I fail so miserably?

I think it's healthy for us to realize not only will others disappoint us, we'll disappoint ourselves. We can't even trust ourselves. And from this, we can learn to trust God even more. An ancient saint of God, Fenelon, wrote the following: "Do not be surprised at again finding yourself becoming sensitive, impatient, haughty and self-willed. You must be made to understand that this is your natural disposition, and without God's grace, you will never be anything different."

This is what we need to learn—that never will we be able to please God or ourselves on our own. C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*: "Very often what God first helps us towards is not the virtue itself but just the power of always trying again. It cures our illusions about ourselves and teaches us to depend on God. We learn, on the one hand, that we cannot trust ourselves even in our best moments, and on the other, that we need not despair even in our worst, for our failures are forgiven."²

² Lewis, C. S. (1952). *Mere Christianity*. Harpercollins Publishers. (Original work published 1952)

If you've been disappointed in yourself lately, use it as a time to cure your illusions about yourself, and remember even at your best, you have nothing to offer God except your heart and your will, and at your weakest and your worst, he can transform you into a vessel for his glory.

Day Four

Would you love to catch the next flight to some forgotten island and leave no forwarding address? Running away sure looks appealing sometimes, doesn't it? I sure have those feelings of wanting to run away from everything occasionally.

King David felt that way, too. He wrote, *Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest* (Psalm 55:6).

Maybe your job is just driving you crazy. Could be a difficult boss or a boring job; could be the people you work with or too much work. Or perhaps you're having troubles with relationships; they can make you want to fly away. Maybe it's your spouse, or your child, or some other family member. Could be a close friend, a romantic relationship. Undoubtedly for many people it's financial worries that make them want to run away.

Whatever it is that's giving you the run-away blues, I want you to know you're not alone. I remember when I begged God to let me out of a job I was in. I wanted out so badly, I thought I couldn't take another day. But God made it clear to me he had a purpose in keeping me there for a while longer. And finally, I agreed to submit and stay there until his time was up.

I look back and see why: I needed to learn many spiritual lessons in that spot, and now I wouldn't take anything for those lessons. There were people with whom I formed friendships and shared the meaning of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I wouldn't have missed that opportunity for anything. And, like icing on the cake, the business knowledge I gained by hanging in another couple of years gave me the resource and experience I needed to start my own consulting company.

It's easy to see that now, but at the time all I could do was simply agree with God to persevere.

Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully (2 John 8).

Most of us give up just before the victory! And when we do, we waste all the hard work and effort that's been poured into our lives.

I want to encourage you today to persevere. Say with King David instead of running away you will *cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken* (Psalm 55:22).

Day Five

I wonder, do you have days when you feel like the score is: the world - 100; God - 0? Does it sometimes appear you're on the losing team?

You go to a job where God is irrelevant to the people around you. Where his name is used only in profanity, and they seemingly give no thought to God as creator, ruler, or sovereign. You're in a daily environment where a commitment to Jesus Christ is looked upon as foolish, naive, laughable. When you apply biblical principles in your everyday world, people take advantage of you, ignore you, or discount your ideas altogether.

Let's face it, that's the way it seems at times. You're walking the straight and narrow, but what for? Where does it get you? The other team does what they please and get ahead for it. Do you sometimes feel like joining the other team? Are you tired of being in the minority all the time—seemingly losing all these skirmishes you face every day?

I want to encourage you today to remember one thing: The final chapter has been written, and we know what the end will be. I think of the young boy who was reading a thrilling mystery book when his mom insisted he put the book down and do his chores. "But, mom, I'm in the fourth chapter and the villain has the hero in his clutches. Looks like he's going to die! I can't quit now." But mom insisted so hurriedly he flips to the last chapter and reads the final page. He then bounds into the kitchen where his mother is waiting and says, "Wow, that old villain is doing real good in Chapter 4, but just wait till he gets to the end of the book. Is he in for a surprise." It looked like disaster in Chapter 4, but when you know the end, then Chapter 4 takes on a whole new perspective.

Maybe you're in Chapter 4 today, and you need to flip to the end and read the last page. It's already been written, and I can tell you the outcome: Jesus wins and those of us who are his followers will win and reign with him. Read Revelations 20, 21, and 22 today.

Remember, God has not lost control of this world. He is bringing it to its end in his time and for his purposes. He is sovereign, and he still reigns in heaven.

So, as you head into that world where it may appear the score is unevenly in favor of the world's crowd, remember the last chapter, and don't let Chapter 4 get you down. If you know Christ as your savior, you're on the winning team!