

The Benefit of Delay

Today I want to talk about a pattern of God that we don't understand...

- We know that God is good, that He when we pray that He answers prayer...
- God is amazing in His capacity to heal, provide for our needs and lead us powerfully...

But what about the times when there is a delay? Sometimes there is a long delay

- When we pray and there seems to be no answer.
- When we get a promise from the Lord and times goes by without the fruition of the promise...

It seems as though the Lord has forgotten us. It seems as though He doesn't care...

Let's look into the Word of God...

We will see that there are MANY situations where there was a delay in the promise of God...

Moses on Mt. Sinai

Exo 24:15-18 (NIV) When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, [16] and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. [17] To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. [18] Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Exo 32:1-26 (NIV) When **the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us.** As for this fellow **Moses who brought us up out of Egypt**, we don't know what has happened to him."

[2] Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." [3] So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. [4] He took what they handed him and **made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf**, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "**These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.**"

[5] When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "**Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD.**" [6] So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

- Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years...
 - Many had adopted the customs of Egypt
 - They were used to MULTIPLE gods
 - They were used to "gods" that could be seen
 - They did not KNOW the unseen God

[7] Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because **YOUR people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.** [8] They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

[9] "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. [10] Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

[11] But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "LORD," he said, "**why should your anger burn against your people, whom YOU brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?**

[14] Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

[15] Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. [16] **The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.....**

- Moses was bringing them the Covenant of God
 - They were essentially a Pagan people who needed to know who YAHWEH was

[21] He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" [22] "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone **these people are to evil.** [23] **They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us.** As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' [24] So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' **Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"**

[25] Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. [26] So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, **"Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him.**

- The story concludes with the death of 3000 Israelites
 - who chose to turn away from God & continue to worship the calf...

Why did God create such a crisis for the Israelites?

- **You can take the Israelites out of Egypt... but can you take Egypt out of the Israelites?**
 - 600,000 Israelites left Egypt... (Numbers 1:46)
 - 3,000 of them died in the days following this event – because they persisted in idolatry
 - They did not repent for making the golden calf – but chose not to follow the Lord

What happened when Moses was delayed?

- What crisis did it cause?
 - Will we wait on/ trust God? – or will we do what we used to do?
- What caused Aaron to make the golden calf?
 - The fear of Man!
- What was the resolution?
 - Repent, turn away from Idols & follow God
- What was the outcome?
 - A people (living in idolatry) who had been delivered by the living God from bondage
 - A people who had an encounter with the living God and were given a choice to follow
 - Justice of God = The Fear of the Lord
 - Introduced to the Holiness & Power of God (vs. the powerlessness of idols)
 - A people who received the covenant of God
 - And Choose to follow Him
- WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE DELAY???
 - Could it be that God caused the delay?
 - In order to reveal what was in the hearts of the Israelites

SAUL OFFERS SACRIFICE AT GILGAL

1Sa 13:1-14 (NIV) Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty- two years. [2] Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Mikmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. [3] Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it.

Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, "Let the Hebrews hear!" [4] So all Israel heard the news: "Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become obnoxious to the Philistines." **And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.**

[5] The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Mikmash, east of Beth Aven.

[6] **When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns.** [7] Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.

[8] **Saul waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter.** [9] So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." **And Saul offered up the burnt offering.**

[10] **Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived,** and Saul went out to greet him. [11] "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "**When I saw that the men were scattering,** and that **you did not come at the set time,** and that the **Philistines were assembling** at Mikmash, [12] I thought, '**Now the Philistines will come down** against me at Gilgal, and **I have not sought the LORD's favor.**' **So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.**"

[13] "You have done a foolish thing," Samuel said. "**You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time.** [14] But now your kingdom will not endure; **the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people,** because you have not kept the LORD's command."

What happened when Samuel was delayed?

- What crisis did it cause?
 - o Will we wait for the blessing of the Lord – or get the ritual out of the way so we can get started
- What caused Saul to make the sacrifice? (Only priests or prophets could make the offering!)
 - o The fear of Man!
- What was the resolution?
 - o God's test of Saul revealed that He was not a Godly leader for the people
- What was the outcome?
 - o Saul was given a chance to repent and become a King "a man after God's own heart"
 - Saul continued to disobey God for 3 more chapters (3 major disobedience events)
 - Including the incident in I Sam 15 where he does not fulfill the command of the Lord – Keeps the enemy king alive and all of the livestock..
 - Samuel anoints David in I Samuel 16...
 - o David – a man after God's Heart was anointed King
 - David led the people of Israel in the ways of the Lord
 - David was a man who loved and obeyed God! (most of the time!)
 - He designed the temple... His son Solomon would build it
 - o The People had a righteous leader who led them TOWARD GOD
 - Not away from following God
- WOULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE DELAY???
 - o Could it be that God caused the delay?
 - In order that Saul be given a choice to repent...
 - In order to establish a King (righteous leadership)

- That would lead the Israelites TOWARD GOD

DAVID AND SAUL

1Sa 24:1-18 (NIV) After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi." [2] So **Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David** and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.

- Saul is HUNTING David
- He is demonized and obsessed with killing David – because of the words of Samuel

[3] He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and ***Saul went in to relieve himself***. David and his men were far back in the cave. [4] The men said, "**This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'**" Then **David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe.**

- David had been anointed King
- Prophets told David that Saul would be removed from being king (not that he could kill him!)
- David could have killed Saul and BY CARNAL MEANS – make the promise of God come true

[5] Afterward, **David was conscience-stricken** for having cut off a corner of his robe. [6] He said to his men, "The **LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed**, or lay my hand on him; for **he is the anointed of the LORD.**" [7] With these words **David sharply rebuked his men** and **did not allow them to attack Saul.** And Saul left the cave and went his way.

[8] Then **David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!"** When Saul looked behind him, **David bowed down and prostrated himself** with his face to the ground. [9] He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? [10] This day you have seen with your own eyes how **the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you;** I said, **'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the LORD's anointed.'** [11] See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life.

[12] May the LORD judge between you and me. And **may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you.** [13] As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so **my hand will not touch you.** [14] "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? [15] **May the LORD be our judge and decide between us.** May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."

[16] When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "**Is that your voice, David my son?**" **And he wept aloud.** [17] "**You are more righteous than I,**" he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. [18] You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me.

David was anointed king in Chapter 16

- Saul was demonized and obsessed with Killing David
- Prophets had told David "God will deliver Saul into your hands"
- David KNEW that the LORD would vindicate Him – "not by might or by power but by MY SPIRIT"
- God allowed David to get close to Saul (when he was sleeping – or not paying attention)
- David knew that WAITING was God's plan
- David knew that HE COULD NOT KILL SAUL

- Saul was anointed by God to be King
 - Saul was to be respected until such a time that the LORD removed Him

David had THE FEAR OF THE LORD

- He did not respond by to the fear of man
- He knew that GOD'S PLAN could not be accomplished by Human power

David WAITS ON THE LORD

David responds to THE FEAR OF THE LORD

- David would wait a total of 15 years (from age 15 to age 30) until he was crowned King
 - In the mean time...
 - Samuel would die
 - David gathered band of all that were in debt & discontent
 - David disciplined and raised up an army in the wilderness– David's Mighty men
 - Men of Reknown! Fantastic men
 - He would again spare Saul's life (Chapter 26)
 - David is forced to live with the Philistines
 - He learned the art of war - became a warrior with the greatest fighting force
 - Saul would consult a witch
 - Saul would commit suicide
 - David was installed by the PEOPLE OF ISRAEL as king with great
 - Would David have been affirmed and followed if he would have killed Saul
 - Some would have been loyal to Saul – others to David
 - Civil war in Israel?
 - The Lord set up David
 - All the people loved and followed Him
 - He had the Fear of the Lord
 - He was the SECOND KING of Israel
 - He was the GREATEST KING of Israel
 - He was the Great- Great Grandfather (supposedly) of Jesus

What happens in Times of Delay?

1. All the imperfections that are lying below the surface come to the top
 - a. Illustration: I will give you \$1000 today or you can have \$2000 in 30 days
 - i. You wait joyfully knowing that WAITING is producing a better outcome
 - ii. We don't see this spiritually – we get focused on the OUTCOME
 1. We don't honor and trust God in the process
 - b. If our hearts stay anchored in the promises of God – the outcome will be great
 - i. We learn how to surrender, recall the promises of God, worship even without seeing
 - ii. We learn to love GOD because He is God.. Not because He does what we want
2. The Fear of Man is done away with
 - a. We learn FEAR THE LORD
 - i. We enter into the purposes and power of God (even when no one is looking)
 - ii. Instead of "deflecting" responsibility – we take responsibility
3. The Fear of the Lord is perfected
 - a. We learn now HOLY, RIGHTEOUS and LOVING God truly is..
 - b. You cannot SPEED UP the process of God = BUT YOU CAN SLOW IT DOWN
 - i. If we do not learn the FEAR OF GOD = the waiting can last a long time
 1. Remember the Children of Israel in the Wilderness
 - a. The generation that Entered Caanan was powerful

- b. They were the children of those who wandered for 40 years
- 4. The Voice/Presence of the Lord becomes real and close
 - a. Because we turn to him in LOVE (not anger) we have sweet fellowship
 - i. We hear Him clearly
 - ii. The prophetic voices are laid aside (like David) for the FULFILLMENT by God
 - 1. Sweet fellowship in waiting
 - b. Men are focused on the END RESULT
 - i. God is focused on the process
- 5. The process of Repentance, forsaking the wrong path and selflessly following the Lord occurs
 - a. The Lord want to build a foundation in our lives upon which He can build upon
 - b. Delay removes all the weakness in our foundation – so that the Lord can word SUPERNATURALLY IN US
 - i. BECAUSE we refrain from building CARNALLY upon his promises
 - 1. HE CAN BUILD SPIRITUALLY – Give us a legacy
 - 2. Serving Him in secret... Allows us to be vindicated in public
- 6. God builds character, skills and strength
 - a. In the waiting – we develop REAL perseverance, REAL love, REAL selflessness
 - b. We must not try and fulfill the promise of God by CARNAL MEANS
 - i. God is slow because THE PROCESS is what He is after
 - ii. He wants US – not to “make all our dreams come true”

What are you doing during the delay that you are in?

- Are you learning to trust God
- Are you focused on the END RESULT – or upon the Lord
- Are you growing and being filled with strength or become upset with God
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