

GOD ... and more of His inspired delays
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It has often been said, "The wheels of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small." When necessary, the Lord can move with devastating speed, but often His movements are in contrast to the ways of earth. Men like speed and often make mistakes trying to reach places too quickly! God sometimes moves with planned precision to accomplish what otherwise would be impossible. The delays of God are among the most absorbing studies in the Bible.

Moses ... the delay to protect God's people (Deut. 34:4)
It has always appeared regrettable that whereas Moses was denied entry into the Promised Land, others who were far less worthy were allowed to enter. Moses made one mistake and lost his blessing, but the rest of the unworthy nation was given the privilege denied their leader. Eventually, the patriarch did get into the land, for Matthew 17:3 describes how he and Elijah spoke with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. The event was greatly delayed, but Moses did get in! That delay probably taught Israel one of life's most important lessons. Throughout Old Testament ages, Hebrew mothers told their children about the leader who brought them from the land of Egypt, but the end of the story was always the same. "Children, he never entered this land. " When the boys and girls asked the reason, the mother gravely replied, "He disobeyed God." Thus did the Lord teach the nation the value of obeying the voice of Jehovah. It was a lesson they urgently needed to learn.

Job ... the delay to prove God's promises (Job 42: 10)
There is reason to believe that Job was never aware of the drama behind the sufferings that devastated his life. He had no idea that God and Satan were watching closely the events taking place. When continuing catastrophes ruined Job's happiness, when boils and carbuncles made life a misery, Job was uninformed that these were being permitted because the Almighty was intensely proud of His servant. "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him ... But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face" (Job 1: 8-11). God was intensely proud of Job, but His pride had to be vindicated before the forces of evil. Job had no way of knowing his problems had more repercussions in heaven than on earth. The confidence of God was being challenged. When the conflict terminated, the Lord rewarded Job beyond his wildest dreams. It took time, but the end was never in doubt.

Saul ... the delay to present God's plan (I Sam. 13:8-10)
Poor Saul, he was in terrible trouble, and yet he alone was responsible for his dilemma. He had attacked the armies of the Philistines and aroused the anger of Israel's fiercest enemies. They retaliated with "thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude" (v. 5). Terror seized the hearts of Saul's soldiers, and desertions were constantly weakening his forces. He expected Samuel to arrive and bless his efforts, but the prophet did not come. "And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And ... behold, Samuel came ... and said, What hast thou done?" Poor Saul, if only he had depended upon God and not on himself. It was illegal for any layman to offer sacrifice, yet Saul took the law into his own hand and sinned. Stupidly he revealed himself unworthy to be the king of God's people and demonstrated what Samuel had known from the beginning. Saul was an

GOD ... and more of His inspired delays irresponsible man whose self confidence destroyed his dependence on God. As the modern expression says, "He had gotten too big for his breeches" and had to make way for a shepherd boy called David. Sometimes God's delays are planned to test us. Blessed is the man in whom God is not disappointed.

Trophimus ... the delay to protect God's preacher (2 Tim. 4:20) The power of God to heal the sick had not diminished. Wherever Paul preached the gospel, sick people were helped; sometimes he even touched handkerchiefs that supernaturally conveyed healing. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that Luke, the beloved physician, also shared Paul's ministry. Those who were not healed immediately by Paul became Luke's patients. The doctor did gradually what Paul was unable to do immediately. When enthusiastic faith healers demand healing for anybody at any time, they exhibit unscriptural stupidity. Doubtless Paul often became weary and consequently valued all the help available. When Trophimus became sick, one would have thought the apostle's touch would have restored health to the valued assistant. Paul could have prayed all night, but it would have made no difference. When God said "No," Paul could not change God's mind! Trophimus needed a rest, and the Lord deliberately put him on his back! This is a lesson that many preachers need to learn. We are not robots, but human beings who have become temples of the Holy Spirit. To ruin our health by unwise activities is dishonoring to God. It is necessary to recognize that the starts, steps, and stops of a saint should be ordered by the Lord. Sometimes delays in answers to prayers are an indication that God is wiser than His people.

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