

The Discipline of Delay

by Denis Lyle

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of patience and understanding God's timing in our lives as part of His divine discipline.

Scripture: Romans 8:28

Topics: "Gods Timing", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches about the Discipline of Delay, emphasizing the importance of patience and surrendering to God's timing. He highlights how God's delays are meant to teach us patience, increase our faith, and ultimately bring greater glory to God. Lyle uses the story of Lazarus' death and resurrection in Bethany to illustrate how God's delays are not denials but opportunities for personal growth and spiritual development.

Transcript

"What's the trouble, Dr. Brooks" That was the question once put to Dr. Philip Brooks, a famous American preacher. The inquirer had come upon him pacing his study like a caged lion. "The trouble I'm in a hurry, and God isn't. That's the trouble". Without doubt one of the lessons in God's school hardest to grasp is The Discipline of Delay. Too often we worry when we should wait, and we resist when we should resign. Often God's delays are to explained on the ground that God wishes to teach us our need of patience. (Heb 10:36) III: The sign on the Mission guesthouse bulletin board says it all.

It said, "Lord, please make me patient... and do it now". Patience was one of the first lessons we had to learn in childhood. The child who does not learn to be patient is not likely to learn much of anything else. It takes patience to learn to read, to spell, to write, and to master multiplication tables. It even takes patience to grow. God has ordained that maturity is a slow process, and not an instant experience. But in our instant society where we eat microwaveable meals and see serious problems resolved in less than half an hour on T.V. talkshows, we wait it difficult to wait on the Lord.

Abraham got weary of waiting for the promised son: so he hurried and took Hagar as a second wife, and she bore him Ishmael. Moses got impatient and killed a man. This necessitated forty years of postgraduate work in the pastures of Midian. Years later, Moses became impatient again, smote the rock and lost a trip to the Holy Land. My, personality differences may enter in here, but we all have the same problem... it is difficult to wait on God. I believe that it was F.B.Meyer who used to say, "God's delays are not God's denials".

They are usually the means, which God uses to prepare us for something better. My, God is always at work for the good of His people, and He is working in all things. (Rom 8:28) This includes the things that perplex us and that pain us. The only way God can teach us patience is to test and try us, and the only way we can learn patience is to surrender and let God have His way. Perhaps the hardest place to be patient is in the furnace of suffering. Ill: A suffering saint once bitterly asked her pastor, "Why has God made me this way" Gently, he replied, "God has not made you...

He is making you". How true! And how easy it is for us to forget this truth. Our loving Father is guiding us, and making us more like His Beloved Son. Hence, The Discipline of Delay. Now I want us to look at this Discipline this... in the lives of those who compromised this little home in Bethany. (1) THE REALITY OF THIS DISCIPLINE That there come into our lives periods when God is teaching us the reality of this discipline almost goes without saying. The Discipline of Delay is a very real factor in our Christian experience.

My, there are times when we are tempted to say, "My Lord delayeth His coming". (Matt 24:48) Or we sigh in the words of Sisera's mother, "Why is his chariot so long in coming". (Judges 5:28) Or we cry out with the psalmist, "How long, O Lord". (Ps 13:1) You see The Discipline of Delay is often related to: (a) PHYSICAL PROBLEMS: Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary and friends of Jesus was sick. The Greek word for "sick", implies that his sickness was very serious. Death threatened, so the sisters immediately thought of the Lord Jesus, who had healed many strangers and certainly would come to the aid of one He loved. (11:5) Now Lazarus lived in Bethany about two miles from Jerusalem.

Christ had returned to the Bethany east of the Jordan (1:28 10:40) and He was there when the message of Lazarus's sickness reached Him. My, those sisters never doubted that the Saviour would rush to their side, and prevent Lazarus from dying. But how different was His love and their thoughts of it. For "when He had heard therefore... was". (11:6) Isn't that an amazing "therefore" Christ did not go, not because He did love them, but because He did love them. You say, "Its a strange kind of love that waits for two days before going to heal a friend that's dying".

But His delay did not mean He didn't love them. Can you imagine love on the basis of time You would say, " Lord, You have 20 minutes to meet this need and if You don't its clear You don't love me". That would be ridiculous. You don't measure love on the basis of time. (11:5) tells us that the delay of (11:6) wasn't a delay of love it was a delay of time. And who of us has not known the Discipline of Delay in this way Were you ever suffering and you cried to God for help Do you recall claiming God's promises and seeking God's help And yet the Lord delayed His Coming... two days and more... slowly dragged by and it seemed to you that God had refused to hear and to help!

My, was God's delay an indication that He did not love you, or was it for your own spiritual profit (a) But this discipline may be related to: (b) SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS: For we often find ourselves in situations apparently not conducive to spiritual happiness and progress. Have you ever sought the Guidance of God and discovered that there is a delay in His answer Jerusalem had fallen. One of the leaders of the Israelite resistance movement had slain Gedaliah, who had been appointed ruler by the Babylonian king, and along with him a garrison of Babylonian soldiers.

After various events had taken place (Jer ch 41-42) the Israelite remnant found themselves facing the question: "What shall we do Are we to stay in the Land of Palestine, or to flee into Egypt" Needing guidance, they came to Jeremiah and pleaded with the prophet to inquire of the Lord for them. Jeremiah

did so. He sought the face of the Lord. And "It came to pass after ten days, that the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah". (Jer 42:7) Ten days! But the people were clamouring for guidance.

Yet the Lord waited ten days. We imagine that we must have guidance immediately don't we I wonder has the Lord who knows best been delaying His answer to you Is God keeping you in the classroom until you have learned your lesson Sometimes this Discipline of Delay is related to: (c) INTELLECTUAL PROBLEMS: Perhaps we have grappled with some of the great questions of life and existence. We have sought for a satisfactory solution. We have sought the Lord and yet no answer has been given.

The Lord has deliberately delayed His intervention on our behalf. Maybe its: (1) The Problem of the Difficult Passages of Scripture: We pray for light and understanding. And yet it is often not until weeks or months or years have gone by that the passage is unlocked and we are led into the treasure house of God's Word. (2 Pet 3:16) (2) The Problem of the Dark Providences of God: Like Job, we may have been led by a very strange path. And on inquiring why, we discover no answer, no light from God. (Job 3:11-12 3:23) Time and again in his experience Job asked WHY Now its easy to ask WHY but difficult to get the right answer.

There's nothing wrong with asking WHY as long as we don't get the idea that God owes us an answer. Even the Lord Jesus asked, "My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken me" (Matt 27:46) My, if the Lord did tell us WHY things happen as they do, would that ease our pain, would that heal our broken hearts Does reading the X ray take away the pain of a broken leg You see we live on Promises and not Explanations. There will come a day when we shall understand all God's strange leadings but for the present we must accept from His Hand the Discipline of Delay.

So this Discipline may be related to (a) (b) (b) and it may be related to: MATERIAL PROBLEMS: Can you imagine how Elijah must have felt when the brook dried up (1 Kings 17:7) "Lord didn't you tell me to come here" "Right". "How can I be in the centre of your will and have a dried up brook" Can you imagine the thoughts that must have raced through Elijah's mind "Has God forgotten me Have I taken a wrong step Should I begin to make my own plans" My, could it be that you're sitting today by a drying brook and a diminishing business Are you wondering how you are going to exist after the water has disappeared Then listen to these encouraging words, " And the word of the Lord came unto Elijah saying. Arise and get thee to Zarephath,... behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."(2 Kings 17:9) My, God's direction eventually will come, guiding you to the next place of His provision, and proving to you that while, the Lord never comes before His time, He never comes to late. (1) (2) THE REACTION TO THIS DISCIPLINE Let's try for a moment to reconstruct this scene in that home in Bethany.

Can you picture Mary sitting by the dying Lazarus, ministering to his needs Can you see Martha up and doing, going outside to strain her eyes for some sign that the Lord Jesus was on His way Can you imagine the astonishment when the messenger returned alone I imagine the conversation went something else. "Where's Jesus" "He's still at Bethabara". (Bethany) "Is He coming" "I don't think so. He said, ' This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby". (11:4) Can you imagine how dumbfounded the sisters were in the face of the now evident fact that Lazarus was already dead For dead he was, and they had his funeral and laid him to rest in the family tomb.

And Jesus had not come. How could they explain this seeming failure What were these sisters to think How were they to explain the Saviour's strange silence and delay (a) WAS THE LORD JESUS IGNORANT Of this crisis! Did something happen to the message Perhaps Jesus did not hear correctly! Is

this how Mary and Martha interpreted the absence and silence of Christ Well, if they did they would have been wrong. For the Saviour was well aware of the entire situation. Being God He knew of the sickness of Lazarus, and He knew the exact timing of Lazarus's death!

My, are there times when you feel that the Lord is Ignorant of your situation (11:11) Are there days when you feel your cry is not heard in Heaven My, be assured this... "Jesus knows all about your struggles". (Heb 4:15) He knows when the boss says, "I think that in the next couple of months you had better begin looking around for another place. Our business can no longer stand two salaries". And you say to yourself, " At my age" Do you think the Lord does not know all about it Do you think the Lord didn't know when He allowed death to come into your family Do you think the Lord did not know what He was doing My, He knows all about the Doctor's diagnosis.

He knows all about the bills that are coming. He knows all about the strife in the assembly. He knows: He cares and He understands. (b) WAS THE LORD JESUS INDIFFERENT Then! I wonder did Mary and Martha begin to doubt the Saviour's concern for them as a family (11:5) Ill: I remember walking into a side room one day in Belvoir Park Hospital and sitting down beside May who was dying of cancer. I was trying to grapple with the situation. She had two small girls back in Ballyrowan, near Magerherafelt.

She had a physically and mentally handicapped lad in a special school and here she was dying of cancer. She looked into my eyes and she said, " Denis has the Lord forgotten me" And as best I knew how I reminded her, " He careth for you". (1 Pet 5:7) My, it was because He loved these sisters that Christ Delayed His Coming! Love dictated the delay. Love designed it for the good of the sisters. Are you doubting your Father's care and concern of you this... Do you think that Christ is indifferent to your situation Well, let me remind that there is never any interruption of that benevolent love that surrounds you moment by moment. (a) (b) Perhaps they reacted ... (c) WAS THE LORD JESUS INVOLVED Perhaps He was too busy doing good, too occupied in helping others to visit the home in Bethany.

But My, this was not the reason why the Saviour delayed. Busy as He was, he was never too busy to refuse to answer the fervent cry of His friends. " Unanswered yet... the prayer your lips have pleaded In agony of heart these many years Does faith begin to fail Is hope departing And think you all in vain those falling tears Say not, the Father hath not heard your prayer: You shall have your desire, sometime, somewhere." (d) WAS THE LORD JESUS IMPOTENT Thankfully Martha seems to have been saved from such thoughts for she assured the Saviour upon His arrival that "if Thou... died". (11:21) It's so easy is it not to think that in our problem God has met His match That He cannot solve our particular situation!

My, is this how you're reacting to this Discipline of Delay Are you saying, "The Lord is Ignorant of my situation, He must be too Involved in something else, He mustn't really love me" (1) (2) Let's close this... by noting: (3) THE REASON FOR THIS DISCIPLINE Why did the Lord delay to come when these sisters sent for Him What was the reason for this delay In order that He might receive: (a) GREATER GLORY: Look at (11:4) You see human love would have revealed itself by hurrying to Bethany with heart pounding, but Divine Love wasn't in any hurry at all.

My, what does the omnipotent Christ have to worry about He knew the delay would make His love all the more real and would bring more Glory to God and more joy and faith to Mary and Martha, and the disciples. He knew a resurrection would be a better testimony to the people than a healing. He wanted to wait until Lazarus was dead so that His power might have a greater impact. Are God's dealings with us not related to the promotion of His glory in our lives By the Discipline of Delay we learn of His power: His

wisdom: and His love.

By this experience we are brought to the place where we can say sincerely, "All things work together for good to them that love God". (Rom 8:28) My, sometimes God delays His intervention on our behalf with a view to our (b) PERSONAL PROFIT: "Ye have need of patience", (Heb 10:36) wrote the writer to the Hebrews. And the only way God can teach us patience is to test and try us. (James 1:4) My, God's delays are also designed to increase our: (c) FEEBLE FAITH: III: We're told that at the Battle of Crecy, where Edward the Black prince, was in charge of the army, his father drew up a strong party of soldiers on a nearby hill and there witnessed the battle.

Once the Prince was sharply attacked by the enemy, and he immediately sent to his father for help. Because the King delayed to send it, another messenger arrived from the Prince urgently craving assistance. The King replied, "Go tell my son I am not so inexperienced a Commander as not to know when help is needed, nor so careless a father as not to send it when it is needed. Let the young man win his spurs". My, are you passing through the Discipline of Delay because God wants you to win your spurs God wants to strengthen your faith, for faith like a roll of film is best developed in the dark.

THE DISCIPLINE OF DELAY! Are you experiencing it Then just hang on. (Is 30:18) says: "And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted." My, the Lord knows what His best, and He knows the right time, so don't ever interpret His love by time. "His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour: The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower."

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