

# When Things Don't Go According To Our Plan

by Sandeep Poonen

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*This sermon reflects on the story of Noah being in the ark for over a year, drawing parallels to our current situations where we may feel like God is delaying in our lives. It explores the dangers of becoming discouraged or seeking alternative options when God's timing doesn't align with ours, using examples from Exodus and the stories of Saul and David. The message emphasizes the importance of faith, endurance, and trusting in God's compassion and timing, even when we feel like He is delaying.*

**Duration:** 28:23

**Scripture:** Exodus 32:1, Hebrews 10:35, Matthew 25:5, 1 Samuel 13:8, 1 Samuel 30:6, Exodus 35:5, Exodus 36:5

**Topics:** "Faith in Delays", "Trusting God's Timing"

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## Description

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## Transcript

What I wanted to share was, I was thinking of Noah. I don't know if you children know the answer to this question. Do you know how long Noah was in the ark? How long was Noah in the ark? Some of you may know the answer, you can tell it to your parents if you can but I think even a lot of adults may not know that Noah was in the ark for over a year.

Think about that, it only rained I think if I'm not mistaken for 40 days and 40 nights, that's just over a month but Noah was in the ark for over a year. If he was living in today's time you would say that he was sheltering in place inside the ark for over a year. Well, it's been over a year for us too where we've kind of have to also been sheltering in place and there may be indications or signs that there may be a chance for us to no longer shelter in place but I don't know if God ever told Noah, you're going to be stuck in the ark for over a year.

I don't think that would have changed anything for him because where is he going to go, right? But in our cases we could also be tempted to be discouraged, tempted to wonder, Lord why did it take so long? 40 days it stops, then why another almost 11 months stuck in the ark, the smell is getting worse, my family is getting on my nerves more. Isn't the time six months is enough and it's going on and on and I think like

that with us in the pandemic too there seems to be signs of hope maybe of things opening up. We don't know what will happen in the future and what I want to share with you all today is what happens when God doesn't meet our timeline, what happens when God delays.

I want to start by showing you this passage that where I started thinking about this from Exodus chapter 32. In Exodus chapter 32 is the story of the Israelites that they've been saved from the Egyptians, they go through the Red Sea miraculously, they watch all these 10 plagues that clearly bother the Egyptians greatly to the point where they finally let the Israelites go. The Egyptians chase after them, they go through the Red Sea miracle after miracle, manna coming from heaven and so on and so forth and they come to Mount Sinai and Moses goes up the mountain but here's what it says in Exodus chapter 32 verse 1. Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down the mountain, the people said make us another God.

I don't know what timeline the Israelites had in mind, I don't know what timeline Moses may have told the Israelites. He may have said look I'm going to go up I'll be back in a couple of days, maybe I'll be back in a week, maybe Moses gave them a timeline for whatever reason we don't know but as far as the people felt, the people felt like Moses was delayed and when the man of God that was leading them delayed then they started to ask questions. We don't know what has become of this man Moses as if he was some stranger.

They don't seem to recognize him anymore, it's only been what is it 40 days and they think it's they delayed too long and that can be true in our lives too. We believe that God has a word for us, God spoke to us seems to be very clearly about something but God doesn't seem to be following up in the timeline that we may think he needs to be following up on. He seems to be delaying and so we start to wonder, I don't know if the word is as reliable as I thought it was when he spoke so clearly to me.

I don't know if the things that I've been taught about God and who he is and what I see so clearly in his word, the evidences don't seem to be lining up with it and it's not that I wasn't patient. I was waiting like Noah, I waited six months, I waited nine months, it's now been over here but God must be delaying and so I start to think of alternative options. I don't know if God really cares for me because the sickness has taken too long, this loneliness has taken too long, the singleness has taken too long, this barrenness has taken too long and on and on, this job that I'm stuck in is taking too long.

I should have been promoted, I should have gotten different career options, whatever it is, it's taking too long Lord and we start to come up with alternative strategies to doubt the word of God because God's word doesn't seem to be showing the evidence of prosperity, of physical blessing and it's getting longer than we thought and we see what happened, the dangerous thing which the Israelites did imagine, the Israelites doing such a crazy thing, building a golden calf. I mean what were they thinking? Did they not remember the 10 plagues? Did they not remember the Red Sea? I mean it was only less than two years back, it wasn't that far away, it wasn't another generation. These were massive miracles, they were receiving manna if I'm not mistaken.

What were they thinking to go from God? Well I don't know where they got disappointed, how they came up with this thing that day. Moses was delayed but for whatever reason even Aaron got pulled into this, sucked into that and built a golden calf that they were all worshipping and that's a warning to be very careful when God in our view delays and what we think he ought to be doing for our lives. Problems that should be solved sooner, issues in our children that should be resolved sooner, whatever it may be.

Other people are getting promoted, other people are getting success in work or neighbors are finding success or family members are finding greater success and we're the righteous ones, we're the ones who are trying to follow God and it's not working out as planned. Be careful dear brothers and sisters, it could be this pandemic is staying on longer, now I'm going to start getting angry at the government, I've waited long enough, now I'm going to start getting angry at my employer. When it feels that God is delaying, let us be very careful, very bad things can happen.

Another story that I was reminded of is the story of Saul. I don't know if you know that Saul started off really well but then here's the first place where Saul went astray, at least in a big way, it was in 1 Samuel chapter 13. If you turn there you can see the story of where Saul went to fight the Philistines if I'm not mistaken and 1 Samuel chapter 13 verse 8, let me read this.

Saul is out there with all of his people and he waited 7 days, 1 Samuel chapter 13 verse 8 and he waited 7 days according to the appointed time set by the prophet of God, Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal and all the people that were following him were trembling, they were scattering from him is what I think another translation said. So Saul says, let me take matters into my own hands, I know what the word of the Lord was, it was very clear to me and Samuel told me he'll come in 7 days but it's been 7 days, it's been the appointed time and he hasn't come so I'm going to take on and do something that God never called me to do and he disrespected the boundary that God had and he did what only a priest should do.

This was the result of Saul again, he could have said, look Samuel you told me 7 days, if you didn't show up maybe I thought you died, maybe I thought you forgot, maybe that was the sign that God told me to take matters into my own hands and we have to be very careful if the Lord has spoken to us and given us boundaries that we stay within that. And as I saw this, I don't know if Saul was really that impatient or if Saul became impatient because he saw that the people were scattering from him, that he started getting affected by all the grumblings of the people around him and he started getting affected and I was reminded in that the contrast between Samuel and David, turn with me to 1 Samuel chapter 30, you see David also facing challenges from his own people, this is before his king Samuel, he doesn't have a huge army of people, he has a few group of people who decided to be loyal to him against the king of Israel, Saul at that time. But now they go to one place and some enemies came and raided that territory, stole their wives and children and it says in 1 Samuel chapter 30 verse 6, 1 Samuel chapter 30 verse 6, David was greatly distressed because the people were not scattering from him, much worse, the people spoke of stoning him because all the people were bitter.

But here we see the difference between Saul and David, David strengthens himself in the Lord and he doesn't say hey guys, let's come up with a plan, let's go attack, right? These people are all angry, these people are all bitter at David, he could have rallied the king that he is in and he slayed Goliath, he was a warrior, he went and killed 100 Philistines at one time, he could have said let's go guys, let's go capture the enemy. But David strengthened himself in the Lord and said, verse 7 and 8, let me inquire of the Lord, let me ask the Lord what he wants me to do. I know all of you guys are thinking of stoning me, but I am not going to respond to all of your threats, I am not going to respond to all of your complaints towards me, family members, relatives, co-workers, telling me what are you doing, why aren't you doing more with your children, why aren't you doing more with your career, why are you stuck in this job or that job, why aren't you doing this, why aren't you going on these vacations, family stoning you, relatives stoning you, threatening to stone you, what are you crazy out of your mind, all kinds of things, despising you, David strengthened himself in the Lord and he said, let me ask the Lord what he thinks, should I go or should I stay? And he went with the instructions of the Lord, he strengthened and strengthened himself in the Lord.

So wonderful contrast where David could have easily taken matters into his own hands, he had more of a reason, his own family and children had been taken away from him, but he said, let me strengthen myself in the Lord, that's what I think Noah must have done too, I don't know if some of his sons or his wives or his own wife may have said, look it's six months, it's time for us to get out. Noah must have also strengthened himself in the Lord, hopefully his whole family was with him in that too, encouraging him saying strengthen yourself, let's ask the Lord, Lord is it time to go out? He sent a raven, nope not time to go out, he sent a dove and at the right time then the Lord says, okay time to go out, not according to your timetable, not to when you think it's ready, when I tell you it's ready. Another story, Matthew chapter 25, we read about the wise and foolish virgins and let's remember they were all virgins, this is not five virgins and five harlots, these are not five virgins and five adulteresses, these are 10 virgins, but five wise virgins and five foolish virgins, so these are all who are trying to keep their outer life at least pure, they're watching what they watch on TV, they're watching what words they speak out of their mouth, they're watching their testimony in front of their co-workers, they are careful with their neighbors, how they represent themselves, they're virgins trying to keep themselves pure, but it says what differentiated them was when the bridegroom delayed, it says that in Matthew chapter 25 verse 5, now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy, it took longer than it is, so it was difficult for all of them and maybe the work changed and they had to spend more time working and they were tired and they didn't have as much time to meet in person or to meet in fellowship, so they were busy with work because that's what required of them, because the world's pressure got onto them, the children got harder to raise, so the parents couldn't, the mother, the father couldn't spend as much time in the world as maybe they used to, as work got harder or the society got harder, but five of those virgins had an inner life, that even though remember the bridegroom was delaying, it was not that the bridegroom felt was on time, but when it took a little longer and I don't know if our society will open up in a month or two or there'll be another resurgence of something or the other, but what's going to happen when in our mind there's a delay, when it's a longer season and I think it should be, when I feel I've suffered long enough, because Peter said after you suffer for a little while then God will establish me, well it's been a little while and then some and we start gauging God according to our clock and according to our time, God says don't do that, what is the response? I wanted to give you two words, one in Hebrews chapter 10 Hebrews chapter 10 verse 35, Hebrews chapter 10 verse 35 through 38, Hebrews chapter 10 verse 35 through 38 and there's a lot to meditate on in these passages, in this passage here, therefore do not, verse 35, throw away your confidence, do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward, for you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what was promised, for yet in a very little while he who is coming will come and here's the word and will not delay, but my righteous one shall live by faith and that's the, you know, and he says, you know, those who have faith for the preserving soul, verse 39 and what the message the Lord was telling me was, I'm not delaying, don't put it on me, I'm not delaying, I'm on time, I'm exactly on the time that I told you that I'm telling you I'll come according to my watch, I'm always on time, God does not delay, he just is delaying as far as we're thinking and what we need to have is, we need to have faith that is proved by our endurance and it is just a little while compared to a thousand years which is a day for Jesus time compared to eternity, our lives are a very short time, he is coming, he will not delay, God is always on time, he does not slumber nor sleep, he watches us, can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the sign of the son of a womb, even these may forget you but I will not forget you, I've inscribed you on the palms of my hands, your walls are continually before me, I'm always looking, you're always on my mind, I'm not delaying, I know exactly the time I need to come the question is, as we read in Luke 18 and other places, will the son of man find faith when he returns on this earth and that's what God is asking us to do, will you remain with faith, Hebrews chapter 11 talks about

Noah, he was a man of faith, he would not have been a man of faith if he did not persevere, if he tried to jump out of the ark after six months, he would not have been a man of faith, he would not have been in this bible, if he tried to short-circuit God's plan but he waited till God said it's time to come out of the ark and that's the first thing that God is trying to do, all of these trials is a testing of our faith and one of the great areas I found that God tests me is, he says you have no idea how long this trial is going to take and you always put a time limit on it but I don't work by your timetable, I do not work by it, I decide how long you're going to have that difficult job or that difficult work or that difficult trial or that difficult neighbor or whatever it is in your life, I decide that it may be for the rest of your life, as Paul said, I have a thorn in my flesh for the rest of my life, God said I'm not taking it away, for the rest of your life you're going to have that thorn, sometimes he takes away some things, sometimes he doesn't, but God's not delaying, he always gives us grace and he says why don't you have faith, the righteous shall live by faith because faith is the evidence of things not seen, so I don't see the answer yet, I don't see the resolution yet but that's the definition of faith, is I don't see it Lord but I live as if it is real, I live knowing that my God is always on time, he does not delay, so I hope that we keep reminding ourselves that even as we find that timelines may slip and go longer than we think it is, answers to prayer may not come according to our area, it may never come at all, the righteous one shall live by faith and we'll be the ones who are pleasing to God because we will live by faith, the other point that I wanted to share with you is from the story of Exodus, in Exodus chapter 32, if you can go back there, you see these people committing a horrible, horrible sin and we see that in Exodus Moses, actually the rest of Exodus chapter 32, Moses comes down from the mountain and he throws the tablets of stone down and he grinds them and mixes them in the water and makes the water drink it and they were really stunned in Exodus chapter 33, you see in Exodus chapter 33 verse 4, the people heard this and go in the morning and they took off all of their adornments and God had said to Moses, well I don't know, these people are so obstinate, let's just take them in the middle of the desert, let's see, I'm going to decide what I'm going to do with it and so the sons of Israel were really sober, they saw the error of their ways and they had really blasphemed God, that's what God said, look you blaspheme my name in this area too, so what does God do? I see God does three things, I wanted to quickly point that to you, number one, God takes Moses up to the mountain again and he has a word for Moses and the word for Moses is, Moses, you don't understand how compassionate I am, who told you to go break those 10 commandments, they were not yours, I gave them to you, it was on my, I wrote on those, it was your anger Noah, sorry it was your anger Moses, you got angry and you just threw them down and crushed it and made the children eat it and maybe this was a warning from God to Moses saying watch your anger, it'll get you in trouble and Moses didn't pay attention to it, so his anger got him in trouble later on when he struck the rock and maybe this was a warning because when Moses goes up the mountain in Exodus chapter 34, God shows him who he is, shows him, look you don't understand the length of my compassion and you don't understand how my loving kindness is, it almost seems in the conversation with Exodus 33 that Moses was being more compassionate with God, no he wasn't, Moses was just having a conversation with God, God was trying to show Moses and show us what is the heart of a true leader which we see in Moses but God was infinitely more compassionate than Moses was and God was trying to show Moses first point in the midst of great tragedy, in the midst of great sin, you don't understand the depth of my compassion and you don't understand the depths to which I've gone and that's demonstrated obviously in the cross, that's a great reminder for us that the Lord is infinitely compassionate, next point Exodus chapter 35, then Moses comes down from the mountain, he's shining with a veiled face and he would speak to God and God's the people just were in awe of him, they had a respect for Moses now that they never had before and Moses and God tells Moses to remind the Israelites of two things and those are the other two points that I wanted to show you in Moses Exodus chapter 35,

it's a surprising first thing that God reminds the people of and it's this, he says keep this habit, don't forget to have your day of rest with me, don't forget to worship me, where you stay still, you lie flat on the ground, you sit on my lap and you do nothing and you just worship me, that's what happens on the Sabbath, that's what happened on the first day when Adam and Eve were created, was supposed to be a day of worship and he said don't forget the Sabbath, you're itching to do something for me, I know you know that you've done something horrible, I know you worship the calf, you want to do something to fix it, you can't do anything to fix it, I'm a compassionate God, you come in first to make the Sabbath, keep the Sabbath, keep it holy and there's a Sabbath rest that God wants us to live in even after we have failed God, God wants us to restore us and show us the extent of his justification, just as if we've never sinned, just as if we've always obeyed and he wants us to come and sit down again and keep the Sabbath, it's an important thing dear brothers and sisters for us after we know that we've failed God in big ways, God says keep the Sabbath and then the next thing he says in Exodus chapter 35 verse 5, he says now also give a contribution to build my temple, to build my house and it's gold and silver and bronze in verse 5 and 6 of Exodus 35, he says here's all the things you need to do to build a temple, yes worship comes first, thou shall worship the Lord and serve him, worship him only and service, worship comes service and service is also important, we ought to serve God and we read, this is what encouraged me about the people of Israel, a lot of things wrong about the people of Israel but it was encouraged me by the people of Israel in Exodus chapter 36 verse 5, the people who were collecting all the contributions, now remember it was a free will offering, that said in Exodus 35 5, Moses said look it should be a willing heart, should be free will but then the people who were collecting all the contributions said please tell these people to stop because we have more than enough and I love that response of the people of Israel, they showed true repentance, they embraced the Sabbath rest at least for a little bit and they contributed above and beyond to build the body of Christ and you know in most churches, many churches, I don't want to say most, in quite a few churches this would be the segue into a new building campaign or so you need to give more money to the church but we know better for those of us who have been taught about the new covenant, we know that God's not interested in our money first of all, he's interested in our heart most of all and our bodies as a living sacrifice and he's interested in building his temple which is our own lives and the church, the body of Christ, those of us whom God has united with us and I want to encourage you all with that heart, if you have failed God more than you think it could have been and you've done horrible things, I can't think of anything as worshipping a golden calf that any of us may have done, God says keep the Sabbath, keep your day of rest, keep your life of rest seated on my lap, worship me for nothing that you've done but because of the sacrifice of Jesus decide to make that your home in my love but then that's not it, let there be an above and beyond response in your actions to build my temple above and beyond response towards sin in your life, keep it holy, take away all the gold and silver and things that are hanging in your heart that adorn your heart, maybe my accomplishments, maybe my career, maybe my children, maybe my degrees, whatever it is, take it all down, adorn my temple with my glory, build my temple in your life with holiness and purity in the inner life and then seek to encourage other people, build the body of Christ by encouraging other people, this is a wonderful message of hope that we can have if we feel God is delaying, let us be very careful about going in the wrong direction, building golden calves out of our career or out of our retirement plans or our children's education and when the Lord feels that we feel like he's delaying, we can do that, let us remember he's not delaying, he's on time, he does not sleep, he does not slumber, he's constantly thinking about us, if we should count how many thoughts he has towards us, it'll outnumber the sand, what a precious truth that is, what a precious promise that is, so let's hold fast to that, that God cannot be delaying, he's on our side, what can be against us and if we feel God where we feel God and we've all failed God, nobody in us, nobody sitting here has not failed God, let us remember to

find our home, a place of rest with God, first of all, let's find that rest that God wants to give us and then let's have an above and beyond mentality to build God's temple, knowing that God is infinitely compassionate above and beyond what we can imagine, may God help us.

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