

Delay or Destiny? God's Perfect Timing - Part 2

"Living in God's Timing - Not Our Own"

Psalms 27:14 ESV

A lot of us have been living in the in-between and the not-right-now. Sometimes God's answer to our prayers isn't "No," it's just "Not now," and many of us are living in the "not now." And we're wondering what's going on? - why are these things happening? - and what does it mean for us when we find ourselves in delay? We find ourselves not doing well in waiting. There's nothing worse than going to a doctor's office when our appointment's at two o'clock and they want us there fifteen minutes early so we can fill out our little paperwork and we get there early and then we don't see them till *three* o'clock - and we can only sit on our phone for so long. We just feel like our life is being wasted.

How should we wait?

1] Wait with the right posture. After we've been praying and seeking God - we've been leaning in and nothing is happening - we feel like our prayers are bouncing off the ceiling. It just feels like nothing is getting through - and we think, "*Does this really matter? Is this really working?*" Sometimes we "grow weary while doing well." The scripture says, "*Don't grow weary while doing good.*" But we *do*. We get tired, and we wonder if our prayers are even working, and sometimes we get disillusioned and grow discouraged and we just completely back off. Then what happens? The guilt comes, the shame comes, the angst comes. But we have to wait with the right posture.

Psalms 27:14 ESV

"Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"

The word *posture* means *position*. It's how we wait. It's the way we wait. Is it in a posture of resting and believing and expecting? Or are we in a posture of anxiety and discouragement? We're to *wait* for the Lord and be strong. Hebrews 12:1 says, "*We're surrounded by so great, a cloud of witnesses,*" and we get the idea of running into an Olympic stadium and seeing a crowd of hundreds of thousands of people cheering for us - waiting for us - watching us - knowing us, knowing our heart, our discouragement, our disillusionment, our weariness, our exhaustion - knowing that we're tired - and they've already crossed the finish line, and now they're in the stands cheering for us and saying, "*You can do it. You've got this. Don't give up. Don't quit.*" And they're cheering, "*Go! Go! Go!*"

As we're just coming out of Thanksgiving - we've been with family and we came in tired. And yet there's a crowd cheering for us right now and saying, "*You've got this. You can do it! Be strong and let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord.*" To *wait* means that we're to wait with expectant hope and to look eagerly for, or place our confident trust in, the Lord - to be in a posture of expectation. It's not a passive waiting or just killing time, but it's an active, faith-filled hoping or expectation in the Lord's character and promised help. The Lord has made promises, and he will make good on his promises - not in *our* timing, but in his timing.

Waiting is active trust, not passivity, or passive in indifference. In other words, we're not just being bored. We don't want to live the rest of our life looking down at our phone and killing time. Waiting is *active trust*. It's *expectation*. It's believing that God is going to come through. And it's understanding our *history* in God. Every cumulative experience we've had in the Lord, every answered prayer, every deliverance, every moment of freedom that we've experienced, every breakthrough that's happened in our life becomes part of our history in God, so now when we get to a place that doesn't look so good, we can say, "*You know what, we've been here before. We've been in this situation before and God was faithful then and he's going to be faithful today, but we have to wait.*"

Sometimes we have to posture ourselves with waiting, but we do it actively. Waiting is alignment with God's pace. We call it the "pace of grace." How do we move at the pace of grace? How fast is that? We don't know. However fast grace happens to be at that time, God has movement - he's moving. It's not always fast. Sometimes it's slow, but we move with him and we're in alignment with *his* pace. God works on us before he works through us. When something's happening, we know that "God's working on something." We may not see what he's working on or even understand what he's doing, but we have enough history in God to know that he's working on something.

Something is happening below the water. Something is happening behind the curtain. Something's happening behind the scene. God is working. Jesus said, "*My father never stops working - ever.*" He's always moving - always working. Something is *happening*. Even when we don't perceive it, even when we don't recognize it, God is working, but he works *on* us before he works *through* us. Some of us might be saying, "*Well, he's been working on me a long time.*" It's okay. Maybe we've given him a hard time, but remember this:

God miraculously delivered the Jews out of Egypt and they started on the forty-year journey to the Promised Land. God parted the sea and performed many other miracles, but what was actually an eleven-day trip to the promised land took them forty years. Why? Because they were not cooperating with God. They were *resisting*. They were not in a posture of waiting with expectation and trust. They continued to make mistakes, and it took longer and longer. God works *on* us before he works *through* us. What's the posture? The posture is humility. The posture is expectancy, and the posture is obedience.

Henry Blackabe said, *"The world has really not ever known what it would be like for one man or one woman to live their lives completely sold out to God."* Imagine that. What would that look like for us? *What if we walked in obedience? What if we walked in repentance? What would happen if we were in complete and absolute alignment with God?* Maybe a 40-year journey would only be eleven days. It's the way we posture ourselves. Our posture in the *delay* determines our harvest in the *destiny*.

Are we expectant? Are we actively and eagerly waiting with hope and expectation? Or are we just killing time. Remember what *biblical hope* is - "confident and joyful expectation of a desired good." That's what it literally means. *Are we waiting with hope and expectancy?* Our posture in the delay determines our harvest in the destiny. Isaiah 3:18 says, *"Therefore, the Lord waits to be gracious to you. [Why? Because he's working on something, and therefore, he exalts himself to show mercy to us.] For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for him."*

A lot of people are retiring now. But for the follower of Jesus, in our walk with him, there is never retirement. There's re-firement. We should want to be re-fired, not re-tired. We should want to run through the tape and finish stronger than we started.

2] Discernment in the delay. That word "discernment" means *an understanding of what's happening around us*. It's a *seeing-into* and *seeing-through* things, where we don't just see what's apparent and on the surface. It's like going fishing and wearing polarized fishing glasses. A lot of times it's like we're just looking into a *glare*. With the glasses though, we can see clearly below the water because the glare is gone. We see there's something beyond that and behind that - and discernment gets that - so, we need discernment in the delay.

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding...In all your ways acknowledge him."

That means to *know* him, *recognize* him, see him, and he will make our paths straight. Our lives could be described as a very crooked road. Wouldn't it be nice if it was eleven miles as the crow flies - a straight line to the promised land - and then we would be at our destination? But life happens. Things break. People break, things go wrong, jobs dissolve, communities disappear - things happen and we get knocked off our path and it's no longer a straight line. *"In all your ways, knowing him to know him, and he will make straight your paths."* Does anybody want a straighter path? *That's absolutely possible!*

Delays can be different things. Sometimes delays can be protective - when God in his wisdom orchestrates a moment on our behalf where if we would have been a little further along or a little further behind, it could have been a very different story. How many times have we seen a wreck on the road and thought, *"If I was a minute or two sooner, if I hadn't lost my keys and got delayed at the house when I was so upset, so frustrated, so angry, had that not have happened, I could have been in that."*

How many times have we been protected and maybe not even known it? And we thought the delay was God *not listening*. We thought that the delay was because our prayers weren't effective. *"Maybe I'm not making a difference. Maybe I don't have enough faith."* And yet, it could be that the delay was protecting and saving and delivering. Sometime delays can be preparational. That means God is working on us. He is working on something. He's getting us *ready* for something - we need preparation, because he is delaying, and something else had to happen because it was preparational.

3] Delays are prophetic. In other words, God is working on something. We're praying for something and thinking it should happen *now*. But God says, *"If I give it to you now, you will not get what I've said the promise is going to be. It'll be diminished in value. It'll be diminished in impact. I'm not here to diminish you. I'm here to increase you, but you're going to have to wait. You're going to have to be patient and posture yourself to wait."*

4] Discernment removes panic from the pause. Sometimes we feel panic because something's just not *happening*. It's not happening *quick* enough. It's not happening *often* enough. We get into a panic and begin to worry: *"Maybe my prayers are ineffective. Maybe God doesn't care. Maybe my prayers aren't as effective as theirs because I'm not as spiritual as they are."* We go into panic mode because something's not happening. But God's *working* on something. His timing is *true*. Discernment removes panic from the pause because there's something else going on here. There's a delay for a good reason. If there's a delay, it may not be because I don't have enough faith. It may be because God is working on something *better*. Maybe it's not supposed to be known. Maybe it's not for *now*.

Delays make sense when you discern their purpose. John Eldridge will often pray, *"Jesus, what's going on here? Jesus, am I missing something here? Jesus, what's really happening here? Please give me clarity."* A lot of times we don't ask for anything because we're too mad to pray. We're too frustrated. We think God's not listening, so we don't even *ask* anything. But what would it be like if we just stopped and said, *"Jesus, what am I missing here? Jesus, did I did I turn left when I should have turned right? Did I did I get off track? Jesus, what's happening? What's really going on here?"* That's asking for discernment. That's asking to see beyond the norm. Delays make sense when we discern their purpose. When we know the purpose for the delay, we can rest in it. We can posture ourselves in a great way.

5] Delays deepen our dependency on God. Sadly, we can act independent with God. *"Don't worry, God. I'm not going to bother you with this. I've got this. I can do this. You see these bootstraps? I'll pull my own up. I don't need you to put my boots on for me. I'll do it myself."* But God didn't call us to be independent. He wants us to be dependent on him.

2 Corinthians 1:8-10 ESV

"For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again."

Why? Because they had history in God. They had learned to simply depend on him and trust him. Delays detox self-reliance. "Okay, Lord. I want to discern what's happening and I want to go deeper with you. Teach me to be patient. Teach me to rest in you." Waiting transforms our prayers from hurry up to "Have thine own way, Lord. I can't make it happen. I can't move this any faster, God. I'm going to lean in and trust You. God, You've got this."

When we have discernment and the right posture, we begin to realize, *"Okay, God's up to something. And when it comes, it's going to be good. How do I know that? Because I have history."* Never diminish or put down your history in God. The God who came through *before* will come through again. The God who spoke will speak again. The God who healed will heal again. The God who provided will provide again. Never give up!

6] Expect a "suddenly". Delays come and it's like *"Lord, really, I prayed and I believed. I thought You were going to come through!"* Sometimes when we're getting down to the wire of something and we're thinking that if God doesn't show up it isn't going to happen. But that's the posture we needed from the beginning - if God doesn't show up this isn't going to work!

Acts 9:3-6 ESV

"Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'"

Delays prepare us for divine acceleration - where we turn from being discouraged in the delay and the "not now" to getting excited about it because of our history. And God reminds us that if we'll just wait a minute, He will show up. God will come through. God will answer our prayers.

God may take years to prepare but only minutes to perform. These delays that happen before God suddenly shows up - we think they're so bad and they take forever. It feels like he's not going to even show up, but God showed up *before*. He showed up *last* time, but he did it in *his* way and in *his* timing. He may take years to prepare, but just minutes to perform. He's preparing us to receive the acceleration, the blessing, and the harvest of our destiny. Stay faithful in the delay - God surprises in the destiny.

We have to trust that whatever we're praying for when we're in alignment with his heart, alignment with his Word, alignment with his ways, alignment with his will, he's going to bring - but we have to trust his timing. We also have to trust the answer and the way he *delivers* the answer. God often brings what we need in a package we didn't expect, like, or appreciate, and at a time we couldn't foresee. God has a great sense of humor - the way he answers prayers. We just have to laugh and say, *"You did that on purpose, didn't You? You brought the answer through that vessel just to blow my mind!"*

When we pray, our prayers need to be truthful, transparent, and especially, be filled with thanksgiving, *"Thank you, God. You're so good. Thank you, God, for your patience, for Your grace, for Your mercy, for Your love, for Your forgiveness, and for Your kindness."* When we pray for specifics, we need to trust his timing, trust the vessel, and the way the answer comes. God has a million ways to get to us what we need. And it probably won't be the way we expected - *but that's okay*.

God often brings up what we need in a package we didn't expect, like, or appreciate, and at a time we couldn't foresee, but we should *expect* a "suddenly." Some of us have a "suddenly" coming, and we've got an "immediately" about to show up. Don't give up. Don't quit. Trust the process. Trust his timing. Discern *why the delay*. Posture yourself to wait before him with great patience and great expectation.

Prayer

Father, we honor You. Thank You for Your Word. Lord, thank You for reminding us today that You are working on things - prayers we've prayed for years are still in the works. Some of the things we ask You to do take a lot of organization and orchestration of events, so Lord, give us the grace to wait. Give us the grace to discern. Give us the grace to expect. Give us the grace to posture ourselves. Give us the grace to expect an end suddenly in Your timing. Father, You're doing a work that only Your grace can do. Give us grace in the waiting. We honor You and bless You in Jesus name. Amen