

Sermon 06: The Delay – Trusting God’s Perfect Timing

By Pastor Ed Anderson

Opening Scripture:

“Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.” (Habakkuk 2:3)
“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.” (Psalm 37:7)

Opening Hymn: #290 – “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

Closing Hymn: #524 – “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus”

Introduction: The Story of the Delayed Train

It was a bitterly cold winter morning in 1914. A young man named James stood waiting on the train platform, his breath visible in the frosty air. He was supposed to board the 8:00 AM express to New York for a job interview that would change his life. But the train was late—first by 15 minutes, then 30, then an hour. Frustrated, he paced back and forth, worried that he was missing the opportunity of a lifetime.

What James didn’t know was that further down the track, the train ahead of his had derailed. If his train had left on time, it would have collided with the wreckage, and he might not have survived. That delay—though frustrating—was actually his **salvation**.

Many of us have felt like James, waiting for something important—a breakthrough, an answer, or relief from a struggle—only to face what seems like unnecessary delays. We question God’s timing, asking, “Why the delay?” But what if the wait is not a setback, but a setup for something greater? Today, we will explore **why God allows delays and how we can trust in His perfect timing**.

I. The Biblical Pattern of Delays in God’s Plan

A. The Delay in Jesus’ Coming to Heal Lazarus (John 11:1-6, 21-23)

One of the most well-known delays in Scripture is **Jesus delaying His arrival to heal Lazarus**.

- Martha and Mary expected Jesus to come immediately when Lazarus fell ill.
- But **Jesus intentionally delayed**, allowing Lazarus to die before performing His greatest miracle—raising him from the dead.

- The delay was not **denial**—it was **divine preparation for a greater glory**.

B. The Delay in Israel’s Journey (Exodus 13:17-18)

- When God led the Israelites out of Egypt, He **did not take them by the shortest route** to the Promised Land.
- Instead, He led them the **long way through the wilderness** because they were not yet spiritually ready for the battles ahead.
- Their delay in reaching Canaan was meant to **build their faith and reliance on God**.

C. The Delay in Christ’s Return (2 Peter 3:8-9)

- Many ask, **“Why hasn’t Jesus returned yet?”**
- The Bible tells us that **God is not slow, but patient**, wanting more people to come to repentance before the final judgment.
- **God’s delay is an act of mercy**—not neglect.

II. Why Does God Allow Delays?

A. Delays Test Our Faith (Isaiah 40:31)

- God allows delays to **see if we will trust Him** even when the answer doesn’t come immediately.
- *“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength...”* (Isaiah 40:31)

B. Delays Refine Our Character (James 1:2-4)

- Waiting teaches **patience, humility, and dependence on God**.
- *“The testing of your faith produces perseverance.”* (James 1:3)

C. Delays Position Us for Something Greater (Romans 8:28)

- Sometimes **God’s “no” or “wait”** is actually a **setup for something much better**.
- Joseph was **delayed** in prison for years before becoming ruler of Egypt.
- David was **delayed** in becoming king after being anointed, because he had lessons to learn first.

III. How Do We Respond to God’s Delays? (The Acronym WAIT)

W - Worship While You Wait (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

- Instead of complaining, **praise God in the waiting**.

A - Align Yourself with God’s Will (Proverbs 3:5-6)

- Sometimes delays happen because **we are on the wrong path**.

- **Ask God to show you if there's something He needs to change in your heart.**

I - Invest in Spiritual Growth (Colossians 2:6-7)

- **Use the waiting season to grow in your faith, prayer life, and biblical understanding.**

T - Trust God's Timing (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

- **God's delays are not denials—He is working behind the scenes for your good.**

Conclusion: A Story of a Delayed Evacuation

In 2021, a massive wildfire broke out near a small California town. The residents received an **evacuation warning**, but some hesitated—thinking they had time. One family, however, immediately packed their essentials and left. They were frustrated because **they had to leave behind their home, pets, and valuable possessions.**

As they drove away, they saw others **still standing outside their homes, unsure if they should leave. Thirty minutes later, the fire swept through the town**, and those who delayed did not survive.

Later, the father said, **"The delay we thought was unfair actually saved us. If we had waited any longer, we wouldn't have made it out."**

This is how God works. **When He says 'wait'—it's for our protection. When He says 'go'—it's for our salvation.**

Final Appeal: Trust in His Timing

Are you struggling with a **delay in your life—a prayer unanswered, a dream unfulfilled, or guidance that seems absent?**

- **Will you trust God's perfect timing even when you don't understand?**
- **Will you worship in the waiting and surrender your plans to Him?**

The delay is not **God ignoring you—it's God preparing you.** Trust Him. He is never late.

Let us pray:

"Lord, help us trust You in the waiting. Strengthen our faith, refine our character, and prepare us for what You have in store. We surrender our plans to Your perfect timing. In Jesus' name, Amen."