

Love's Delay

In times of difficulty, sickness or the death of a loved one, it seems natural for man to question God's love. We ask, "*If Jesus really loves me, why would He let this happen? Why doesn't He help me, right now, in this situation?*" We are not the first one to feel that way.

John 11:1-6 tells us, "*Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped His feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, 'Lord, the one you love is sick.' When He heard this, Jesus said, 'This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.' Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when He heard that Lazarus was sick, **He stayed where He was two more days.***"

Scripture tells us that Lazarus was serious sick, and Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus, but Jesus delayed His coming to their aid. As a result of this, Martha and Mary began to doubt the reality of Christ's love. How could they square the fact of His delay with His love? Why, if He really loved them, did Jesus not *immediately* rush to their help, if not to heal their brother, at least He could be there to comfort them. Yet, Scripture says, "*He stayed where He was two more days,*" arriving in Bethany only after the burial of Lazarus had taken place.

Why Did Christ Delay?

1. God's delay are "*delays of love!*"

It was because Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus, that He stayed where He was.

We fail to understand how things are, however, God sees the end from the beginning and He sees how this particular event contributes to His over plan. He see how *this* situation will end for our good. When we come to realize why this "*thing*" has come upon us, we will begin to understand things from God's point of view and that He is in control.

(A) JESUS' DELAY WAS NOT THE DELAY OF INDIFFERENCE

Christ's love had not changed, He did care.

There is a beautiful story which Jesus gives that tells of His love, and how it works in Luke 18:1-8. It states, "*Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 'For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?'*"

In this parable, a widow was a victim of injustice, however, there was nothing in it for the judge to average her of her adversary, so he did nothing. The widow kept persisting until she "*wearied*" the judge and, when the judge saw that she just was not going to quit, he answered her request. Jesus was *not* showing God as this unjust judge, but He was showing the widow as one who persists in their requests to God.

INDIFFERENCE IS NOT A CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD

(B) THE REASON THERE SEEMS TO BE A LACK OF GOD'S LOVE IS NEVER BECAUSE IT IS GOD'S PRODUCT OF PREOCCUPATION

God is never too busy to deal with our problem.

1 Kings 18:27 tells of the time when He was at Mt Carmel and the 450 prophets of Baal were crying to their gods to bring down fire to burn up the offering on the altar. It states, "*Elijah began to taunt them. `Shout louder!' he said. `Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.*" What Elijah was saying was that their gods were preoccupied, implying that his God, Jehovah, is never preoccupied to listen to His children.

(C) GOD'S DELAYS ARE ALWAYS PURPOSEFUL

God's love always has purpose, even in seeming delays.

I don't pretend to be able to always know what God's purpose is in what seems like His delays. Scripture tells us that "*His ways are not our ways*" and we cannot see the end of how things will turn out, God can.

WHAT SOME OF GOD'S PURPOSES MIGHT BE:

1. GOD DELAYS HIS ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS IN ORDER TO MOLD OUR ERRANT-WILL IN ORDER TO CONFORM US TO HIS PERFECT WILL

If God answered all our requests immediately, we would soon come to God, just to have Him formulate *our* plans, however, God delays His answers to our prayer in order that we learn to pattern our "*will*" after His perfect will.

2. GOD DELAYS HIS ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH IN HIM

It is true that, if we always got immediate response, we would not grow in our spiritual walk of faith. Faith grows when we are forced to wait for answered prayer. Our faith grows strong as we learn to trust that God knows what He is doing and that He will fulfill His promises *in the proper time*.

Abraham waited until he was 100 years old, before God answered his prayers for a son by Sarah. His faith did not weaken and die! Romans 4:3 states, "*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*" God's seeming delay in answer Abraham's prayer, strengthened Abraham's faith in God.

3. GOD DELAYS HIS ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS IN ORDER TO BRING HONOR TO HIS NAME

In the words of our text, "*When Jesus answered, 'This sickness if not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby'*" (John 11:4).

We may ask, "*What kind of God is He, who has to have honor?*" To those who knows God, will not find this to be a puzzle, they realize how glorious Jesus is, and that it is only proper to honor Him.

**God help us to learn to interpret circumstances by God's love,
rather than attempting to interpret God's love by our circumstances!**

We begin our prayers by saying, "*Christ Jesus loves me, therefore, I will do my best to see purpose in what is happening to me.*"

GOD'S SEEMING DELAYED-HELP ALWAYS COMES AT THE RIGHT TIME

God's clock is *different* than ours. Our days have only twelve hours in them, while God's "*day*" has a thousand years in it. How long did Jesus really delay His coming to Mary and Martha's request? This delay was two days . . . *48 hours!* How long is 48 hours in the light of eternity?

We must learn to see behold God's action from His point of view, rather than, by our concept of the circumstance. God always acts immediately - *when the time is right!*

We can learn from Peter experience in prison, given to us in Acts 12:1-17. Remember, Herod had imprisoned Peter *before* the Passover and it was not until *after* the Passover was over, *seven days* later that God delivered Peter. The church had been praying for Peter's deliverance for **seven days** and, God *delayed* His help until just the night *before* the execution was to take place God's answer came, not too late, and it wasn't too soon, it was just in time.

Even when God's angel appeared and Peter's chains fell off, Peter was not in any hurry. The prison gates swung open, and Peter was still not in any hurry to run out. Scripture tell us that the angel told Peter to take the time to put his shoes on, and waited while Peter did just that. Then the angel said, "*Put your robe on*" and, Scripture tells us that it was only after this was accomplished that Peter and the angel "*walked out*" - they didn't run, they "*walked out.*"

God does not always delay His actions

"*God's delay,*" is only half of the story, there are times when God desires to answer quickly. Isaiah 65:24 makes reference to the fact that God says, "*Before they call, I will answer and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.*"