

Esther Chapter 5 - When God Delays

You never realize how much you use something until either it doesn't work, or you don't have it anymore. It didn't happen this winter (yet), but it has in winters past - frozen pipes! How many times a day do I casually walk to the sink, lift the knob and enjoy the comfort of running water? With two boys in the house, the answer to that question is TOO MANY.

I remember last month following one of my Facebook buddies and their quest to unfreeze pipes leading to their house. After talking to the owner of the home, a plumber, and even city workers, they were told that the pipes would just have to thaw on their own. There wasn't really anything that anyone could do. Their level of frustration was through the roof. After all, delays are the WORST, right?

We talked several weeks ago about God's providence and how we've seen it in our own lives. I wonder though, how many of us can look back at God's hand in our lives and see Him working things out through a delay that we considered to be of tremendous inconvenience? I think of David when he wrote in the Psalms *"I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God"* (Ps. 69:3). Again, he wrote, *"My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation"* (Ps. 62:1).

We talked Sunday about the delays in Esther's story. Why did Haman choose such a large gap of time between the edict to destroy the Jews and the actual annihilation date? (Esther 3:7, **"they** cast the pur (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman to select a day and month." I seem to remember back in our study of Joshua a verse concerning the casting of the lot. Proverbs 16:33. When we get to chapter 9, we'll take a closer look at the details of the word "pur" and the festival called "purim," but for now, know that God ultimately orchestrated this delay of about 11 months from the securing of the edict until the proposed execution of it.

Why wasn't Mordecai rewarded for saving the king right when he did it? Why didn't Esther share her request with the king the first time he offered to hear her? Or the second time at the banquet? Why the delays? We offered up a couple of reasons that tied into Genesis 15:16 and 2 Peter 3:9. What about when we feel the Lord's call on our life, and we surrender totally to Him, yet the pieces don't fall into place as quickly as we would like? What about when God delays in healing or bringing deliverance?

**Why does God (sometimes) delay answering on things that seem so urgent to us?**

Consider with me an account from the New Testament found in Acts 24:24-27.

***24 But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you." 26 At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. 27 But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.***

That statement takes only a second to read, yet it represents two long years of the Apostle Paul's life. Doesn't that sound like a wonderful opportunity for God to make an example of someone? A self-centered politician keeping God's number one apostle to the Gentiles in prison - does anyone else hear

that? Sounds like an opportunity for judgement coming on the horizon. But we don't really see that. Instead, we see an amazing, Godly man having to submit his agenda to the God that he served.

If you read Romans 15:25-29, you'll see what Paul's agenda was. Sitting in prison for two years wasn't part of that agenda. As Steven Cole said, *"Paul was a great man of faith, but no one graduates from the Lord's school of faith in this lifetime. Paul had post-doctoral degrees, but there were still more courses to take!"* Cole continues, *"There is nothing wrong with godly desires and hopes for the future. We all should dream about what God may do through us in the future. We should plan, as much as we're able, by setting godly spiritual goals for our lives. But after all the planning and goal-setting are done, we have to bow and say, 'Lord, not my will, but Your will be done with my life. I trust in Your agenda for me.'"*

The last word that the Lord had given Paul was that he would witness in Rome as he had also witnessed in Jerusalem. Missing from that word was a heads-up regarding the bloodthirsty Jews who wanted to kill him. Absent was the warning about false accusations that would reign down in the court of Felix. Nothing about his two years in jail. Definitely nothing about a shipwreck on the way to Rome or a layover in Malta.

Those are only a part of the hardship that the Apostle Paul suffered as he went about the business of sharing the Good News. For a comprehensive list, see 2 Corinthians 11:21-33. And yet, what was his refrain at the end of his life? See 2 Tim. 1:7-8,12; 2:3-6, 8-13.

Paul's refrain, essentially is to press on - it's worth it. After all, consider a few of the wonderful things that Paul learned during his times of difficulty and imprisonment:

We must trust that delays won't derail the sovereign plan of God.

We must trust in God, not our circumstances.

Though God delays, we don't cease to do the right thing.

### **How can we keep our focus on the Lord rather than our circumstances, especially when our circumstances seem overwhelming?**

Part of trusting in God means trusting that He is sovereign, He is a God of providence, and sometimes, He delays. In the case of Esther, Mordecai and Haman, it's not too hard to see that God was VERY active during the perceived delays. It's usually too much to fathom, when we think about all the great things that stem from God's delays. Consider Ps. 126:3 and Lam. 3:26, (ties in with 2 Pet 3:9) And at the same time, what about waiting on God? **Are waiting on God and enduring His delays the same thing?**

I'll leave you with four principles that Chuck Swindoll draws from Esther chapter 5 in relation to waiting on God: **"First:** When preparing for an unprecedented event, wait on the Lord before getting involved .. **Second:** When dealing with an unpredictable person, count on the Lord to open doors and hearts .... **Third:** When working through an unpleasant situation, trust the Lord for enduring patience .... **Fourth:** When standing against an unprincipled enemy, ask the Lord for invincible courage."

**The mind of man plans his way,  
But the LORD directs his steps.**  
(Proverbs 16:9)