

Example of Abraham



Waiting for God (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week: Waiting for God.

In my previous talks I've pointed out four benefits of waiting for God. First, waiting for God develops stability. We saw how in the case of the Psalmist, first of all he said, "I shall not be greatly shaken," then he said, "I shall not be shaken at all." So we see a transition to complete stability out of waiting for God.

Second, waiting for God is a necessary part of the process by which we are made mature and complete. James tells us that this process requires perseverance and perseverance means holding on, both when we're busy and when we've got nothing to do—we still have to hold on. That's the hardest test.

Third, waiting for God produces serenity. It's the answer to fretting, anger and wrath. And fourth, waiting for God results in a supernatural transformation. Isaiah tells us that those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength, but literally will exchange their strength. In place of their own natural strength they'll receive God's supernatural strength. So waiting on God is the way to receive God's infinite resources.

In my talk today, I'm going to illustrate this principle of waiting for God from the life of Abraham. First of all, we need to see that Abraham is both our spiritual father and our pattern. Consequently, his experiences are particularly important for us as believers. This is stated by Paul in Romans chapter 4, verses 11 and 12, where he says:

> "And he [that is, Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised." (NIV)

We see then two important points. First, Abraham is father of all believers; second, we need to walk in the footsteps of

Abraham's faith. His life is a kind of pattern for us.

How does this apply then, to waiting for God? It applies very specifically in the life of Abraham. In fact, I would have to say that was one of his greatest tests, possibly his greatest. You see, the fulfillment of God's purpose in Abraham's life centered around the birth of his promised heir. He was told he was going to have an heir and through this heir God would bring forth a nation through which all other nations would be blessed, and that his descendants would be multiplied as the stars of heave and as the sand on the seashore. And everything in his life ultimately depended on the fulfillment of the promise of an heir. But for this he had to wait for God.

Now as we study Abraham's life we see two aspects to the example that he gives us. One is negative, the other is positive. Abraham didn't always do the right thing. In this respect he failed. He made a serious mistake. He was not prepared to wait for God. Let's look at the time frame of Abraham's life. It's interesting. Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran on his journey to the Promised Land. After ten years he got tired of waiting for the promised heir and so he did something to help God—if I can put it that way. He did it in his own cleverness and in his own strength. Apparently Sarah couldn't have a child, so with Sarah's full consent and in fact, at her suggestion, he took as a concubine Sarah's maid, Hagar, and he had a child by her who was called Ishmael.

Now Abraham was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael. Before Ishmael was born the angel of God foretold what his character would be. This is stated in Genesis 16, verses 11 and 12.

> "The angel of the Lord also said to her [that is to Hagar]: 'You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. [Ishmael means 'God has heard.' Verse 12 describes the kind of son.] He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.'" (NIV)

It's important to see what the product of our own impatience and carnal impulses is. The result is a "wild donkey." It's very clear language about this son—"He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." See, that's a very vivid picture of what comes of not waiting for God—just going ahead in our own carnal impulse and doing what seems right in our eyes, accepting somebody's helpful suggestion, trying to help God—the result is not that we solve our problem, but that we aggravate our problem by doing that.

The descendant of Hagar, Ishmael, is essentially the father of the Arab nations of the Middle East. And the problem that started then, has continued for 4,000 years and is more acute now than it was then, because it's the descendants of Ishmael who are the unrelenting totally opposed enemies of the state of Israel, and of the descendants of the promised seed, Isaac and Jacob. So if every history has a lesson, the lesson is it pays to wait for God, it's dangerous to lose your patience and go ahead, act on your own initiative, yield to your carnal impulses and other people's helpful suggestions, and try to help God out and solve your problem your way. Because instead of solving your problem, you're going to aggravate it.

Now we'll turn to the positive aspect of Abraham's example for us. For the next 13 years, after Ishmael was born, Abraham had no further recorded revelation from God. He was 13 years out of harmony with God. How had he got out of harmony with God? By going ahead in his own impulse by not waiting for God. You see, waiting for God is essential to being in harmony with God. However, 13 years later, and that must have seemed a long 13 years to Abraham, when he was 99 years old, God gave him the seed promised: Isaac, born of Sarah. Isaac was actually born when Abraham was 100 years old. So Abraham had to wait 25 years for the fulfillment of the promise upon which everything that mattered in his life depended.

Can you identify with Abraham? Consider what it means to have to wait 25 years; see your own body grow old; see Sarah, your wife, grow old; realize that in the natural all hope is totally gone. But now, notice what I emphasized yesterday, the supernatural transformation that comes out of waiting. For this we'll turn to Hebrews chapter 11, verses 11 and 12, which describes the outcome.

> "By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand of the seashore." (NASB)

What was that the product of, that supernatural miracle that transformed the physical condition of both Abraham and Sarah, made it possible for them to have a child of their own, what was that the outcome of? It was the outcome of waiting for God. You see that's an endorsement of what Isaiah says in

chapter 40: “Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength.” And more literally, “Will exchange strength in place of their own worn our bodies, their own limited natural ability, they will receive this divine, supernatural strength and enabling.”

Let me make a final comment on this. God’s supernatural purposes require, what I call, a gestation period. They are not instantly fulfilled. God’s promises are like seeds. Dropped into the earth they take time to bring forth the promised results. Now during that period of gestation we are waiting for God. So you see, waiting for God is a necessary and logical requirement for receiving the enduement of God’s supernatural ability and power that alone can produce the result that we need.

Well our time is up for today. I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I’ll be developing a theme that I just touched on today: Harmonizing With God.

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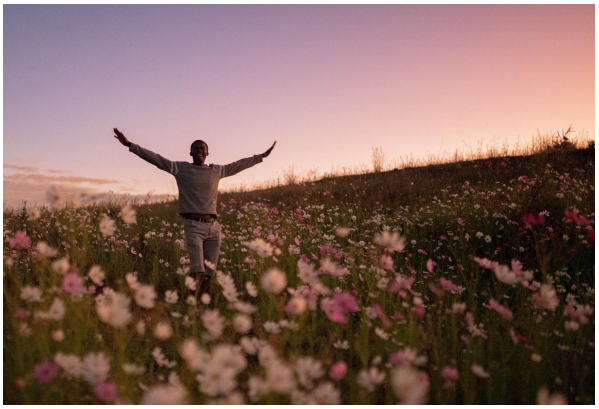

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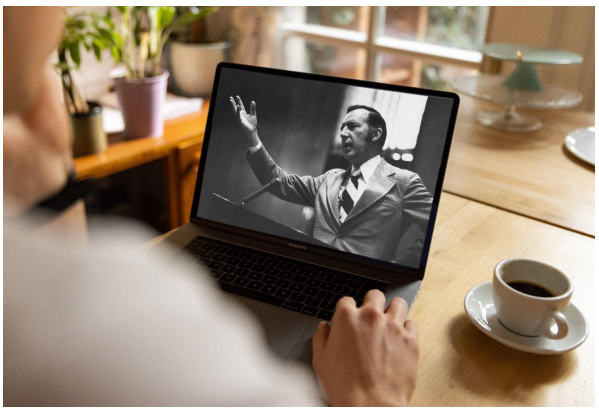

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