

God's Interminable Delays

(FILE: DELAYS FINAL)

by Desmond Ford

Why should Moses wait eighty years before his real life work? Why all those decades in court and desert before undertaking the work of redemption? And Paul, did you know that he had a fourteen year delay before he began to do those things the Spirit felt worth recording in the New Testament? And you, is your work and life tedious, are you measuring out the moments by coffee spoons—"tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow"?

His thoughts are surely not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways. They are higher, just as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is just as though God is more concerned with making people than making waves. More concerned with soul-making than casting down the social and religious strongholds of error and evil. Maybe.

Take Moses. "Forty years learning to be somebody, forty years learning to be nobody, then God could use him for forty years." Exactly. When God wanted to make a world he started from nothing, worse than nothing—chaos—without form and void and wreathed in blackness.

Take Paul. Trained at the university of Tarsus, tutored by the best Jewish teacher of the day, a citizen of Rome, probably a member of the Sanhedrin. He had it made. Did he? He was also a murderer. He held the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, and he breathed out vengeance against all Christians wherever he might find them. He ~~might have~~ had something to learn as surely as Moses. X

So Paul spent three years meditating in Arabia and studying the ancient scrolls of Scripture. Then he gave ten years of Christian service at Tarsus, but if our available reports are to be taken as the last word, he did not do much worthy of shouting about. Paul—fourteen years of training in solitude and behind the real stage before he came into sight. Well, that was a lot quicker than it was for Moses.

Is God in more of a hurry now? No, that can't be it. Remember his ways are past finding out. But we do hear whispers of his ways. Job says so. Job ^{28:14} 38: We see though a glass dimly, but we DO see. Enough to walk. Not enough to boast. *There is a clue as to why for delays in an odd question/answer*

Does God care for oxen, asks Paul? See 2 Corinthians. The real answer is "yes," as the Old Testament testifies, though Paul asked the question with another issue in mind. God's tender mercies are over all his works and he counts a human guilty who does not care for the life of his beast. See Proverbs. So he must care for oxen. (~~Des this doesn't quite make sense!~~)

X does too

There was a time when Christ's message about a donkey was: "The Lord hath need of him." How wonderfully encouraging. Most of us have behaved ~~plenty~~ like donkeys and have often been mulish, but maybe the Lord in His wisdom has need of us. *But why so much delay in getting us to work?*

~~But~~ remember the man who sold a donkey. The buyer came back with the complaint that the animal was not obedient. "Not obedient?" queried the former owner. *That can be fixed.* "First get his attention—hit him with a two-by-four."

Hmm! Does God train us with two-by-fours? Yes, and by gentler methods. The more mulish, the more two-by-fours. Wooden heads need wooden attention-getters. When He has our complete attention, life and service begin. *The delay is over*

