

God is busy while you are waiting Hebrews 6:15

Proposition: Sometimes there is a gap between God giving a promise and you receiving its fulfilment. God is busy in the gap!

Broken promises often bring broken hearts.

You and I all know someone who maybe 5 or 10 years ago stood at the altar and promised to love their spouse for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. But now 5 years later hubby has come home and told his wife, you no longer meet my needs, I am moving on. The promise is broken and it hurts the wife, the children and the community.

Maybe you know a young man with a hard working dad or a dad that he only sees every once in a while. You are familiar with the scene where dad promises to take little Johnny fishing in the weekend and Johnny is just so excited and he puts his fishing tackle by his bed and he plays with the rod and reel practising bringing in a big fish, and then Friday afternoon comes and there is that phone call from dad, son, I am really caught up at work, or son I just don't have enough for petrol, or son your aunty needs my help this weekend, so I am sorry we can't go fishing. You understand don't you son. Oh yes dad, it is alright, I understand, and little Johnny hangs up the phone and slumps to the floor, so disappointed.

When someone promises you something and it doesn't happen when and how you think it should, it hurts and it is disappointing. Our Bible has often been called a book of promises. Some patient person has counted up all the promises in the bible and said that there are over 4,000. It's a book of promises.

Now you and I know that God in heaven is not like your dad, He's not like the best dad in the world, He is like Jesus, perfect and faithful.

So how do we cope and what do we do with those situations when we read a promise from God and we believe it and we write it out, maybe stick it on our fridge or screen saver, and we are trusting God to come through for us . We thought it would be instant, after all why not, He is God but it is been a couple of hours or a week, or a month or a year or 10 years or 30 years and still it hasn't happened. What's with that? How come some promises seem to take such a long time for God to fulfil? He is a loving God why on earth would He make us wait? It seems cruel and at times if we are honest there are moments when we feel maybe God has dropped the ball on this one for us. Maybe God has let us down and it hurts.

Now if you have been believing God for something for quite a while and it hasn't happened yet you know what I am talking about. If you haven't been in that situation yet you will be one day or at the very least you will know someone who is going through such an experience. My prayer is that these few verses unpacked today might help you understand and begin to see why, our Father, who is in Heaven and loves us so much, may cause us to wait for some time before He comes through on a promise He has made to us.

I want to pick up and focus on the last few verses of last week's passage. Would you stand with me as we consider and meditate on Hebrews 6:11-15; vs 15 being our key passage today?

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

¹¹We wish that each of you would always be eager to show how strong and lasting your hope really is. ¹²Then you would never be lazy. You would be following the example of those who had faith and were patient until God kept his promise to them.

¹³No one is greater than God. So he made a promise in his own name when he said to Abraham, ¹⁴"I, the Lord, will bless you with many descendants!" ¹⁵Then after Abraham had been very patient, he was given what God has promised.

Our text encourages us to follow the example of our forefathers and one in particular who after he had been very patient was given what God had promised.

Father Abraham was 75 years old and his wife Sarah 65 when in Genesis 12 we read that God told Abraham to leave Heron and to go to a new land. He also said to Abraham I will give you a child and your offspring will be as uncountable as the stars in the sky. The father of faith was 75 and his wife was not young either and they had been praying for and waiting for a child for years now, while they are drawing on their superannuation so to speak, God says he is going to come good on His promise to them and give them a child. Wow, how excited Abraham and Sarah must have been initially and they obey God they leave their home village and begin to head out to a new land believing that God would give them a son and that, that son would become the first of the children of Israel. Twenty five years later God came through on his promise to Abraham and gave Sarah and Abraham a son called Isaac.

I want you to know friends and not be surprised or down hearted when you find that there is often a gap between God giving the promise and the promise being realized. Here it was 25 years. But God is at work in the gap!

Vs 15 After Abraham had been very patient he was given what God had promised.

Good on you Abraham. Twenty five years of patience of trusting God.

Now if you know the story you will recognise that here in the New Testament something is being left out of the story isn't it?

The goodness of God, the new covenant as reflected in the New Testament is just amazing. Did you know that all the Old Testament heroes turn up in the New Testament somewhere but that none of their sins and shortcomings are ever recorded against them in the New Testament. Why is that?

Because when you sins are forgiven and you are living in relationship with Him He says your sins are remembered no more.

When the heroes of the Old Testament are remembered in the New Testament God clearly has chosen to forget their sins. That's grace. Jesus has covered it.

After Abraham was very patient he was given what God had promised.

Now you and I have read Genesis 12 and you and I know that he wasn't very patient for the whole 25 years. Thirteen years before Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah what happened? They had left their home village excited and obedient moving out to the new land and the promised son , the first couple of years they were ready for babies daily but then after 5 years , then 10 years then 12 years they were beginning to wonder if ever God would come through on his promise to them.

One day 12 years after God had given the promise Sarah took Abraham aside and said, honey, it is no longer possible for me to get pregnant, and you aren't looking too good either, have sex with my servant girl Hagar and if an old wrinkly like you can get her pregnant we will call the child ours and he will fulfil Gods promise. Now Abraham's faith and patience must have been pretty low because he just said, sounds like a good plan to me and he slept with Hagar.

Faithful? Patient? Not so sure.

They tried to give God a hand, to force His promises to be fulfilled in their own strength and according to their own plans and the result was Ishmael the father of the Arab nations and conflict has existed ever since.

If you try to help God fulfil His promises, you try and force things to happen ahead of His timing, what you get is a real mess!

Thousands of years later we see the consequences of Abraham's impatience and bad decisions on the news every week.

Now 13 years after Ishmael, against all medical possibilities, Isaac was born and God fulfilled His promise to Abraham. Abraham did learn, he was patient, but not perfectly patient and God chose to forgive and forget his sin.

6:15 Then after Abraham, had been very patient, he was given what God promised.

Family I want you to know that there is often a gap between God promising something and us realizing that promise practically, but don't become disheartened or disappointed God is at work in the gaps.

I want to give you three reasons;

3 REASONS WHY THERE IS OFTEN A GAP BETWEEN GOD PROMISING US SOMETHING AND US BEING GIVEN WHAT WE HAVE BEEN PROMISED;

1. IT'S HIS WAY OF PRODUCING ENDURANCE WITHIN US.

The prophet Jeremiah reached a point in his ministry when he was getting tired and fed up with the waiting. He was prophesying things from God but those prophecies weren't all being fulfilled immediately and Jeremiah is thinking God it would be good if you come through on this now please. God says this to him;

Jeremiah 12:5

The LORD Answers Jeremiah

⁵Jeremiah, if you get tired in a race against people, how can you possibly run against horses? If you fall in open fields, what will happen in the forest along the Jordan River?

We are living in a fallen world and as a consequence of sin there are earthquakes, viruses, sickness and death. The Bible goes on to say that the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. That is these problems, these storms in life happen to all of us whether we are super spiritual and good or real rat bags. In this world storms happen to everyone. Jeremiah is getting tired. He is finding ministry

draining and he wants God to make things easy, come through on some prophecies right now to take the stress off Jeremiah.

Jeremiah is wanting God to change the situation around Him but God is more concerned about changing Jeremiah and producing endurance in him. God can see what is coming up down the track for Jeremiah and giving him a easy life and answering all his prayers instantly is not going to be good prep for what is coming. Like a weather forecaster he looks ahead and sees what Jeremiah will face soon and he wants to build character in Jeremiah and prepare him.

Jeremiah if you are getting tired now of running against people how can you possibly run against the chariots when they come. If you are finding it hard to run in the open field today, how on earth will you be able to cope with running through the dense forest that you will need to run through tomorrow?

If I were 21 again and knew how difficult it would be to be a parent would I have had children? If I knew what financial pressures I would face ahead would I have bought property? If I knew how challenging ministry could be at times would I ever have become a pastor? Looking back on the challenges of the last 27 years I see that God trained me to be able to handle those things but man if I knew what lay ahead of me at 21 I would have been shaking.

So sometimes God delays the fulfilment of a promise to build endurance in us.

He prepares us for what he knows is coming our way later in life.

Secondly

2. TO PREPARE THE PERFECT BLESSING FOR US

A few years ago I was told that one in ten NZ couples cannot conceive a baby without medical intervention. That's a tough thing to go through.

In the bible there was an amazing old couple who knew just what that was like. You can read about them in Luke 1. They were described as Godly, righteous and blameless people but were unable to conceive. They were very old and Zechariah and Elizabeth had stopped praying for a baby many, many years earlier.

One day an angel appears to Zechariah the priest as he is burning incense in the temple and says that God had heard his prayers and that he and Elizabeth were going to have a child. Zechariah didn't believe it and was unable to share his faith or talk for 9 months as we are too if we are stuck in unbelief.

The baby that God gave them was far greater than they could have ever asked for or imagined. He was the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets and prepared the way for Jesus, His name John the Baptist.

The promise was fulfilled amazingly, better than this old couple could ever have imagined, but God had a plan and his timing and his fulfilment of His promise was perfect.

I think one area we see this all the time is in the way people look for a husband or a wife. They know that God will give them the desires of their hearts and they want someone with a strong faith, amazingly good looking, someone on a high income, someone who can be trusted and only have

eyes for them. And I think when people pray for a spouse like that God has a desire and a plan to answer that prayer, to fulfil his promise to them. However to get the amazing spouse God may have to do a whole lot of thing in you to attract such a person, he may also have some prep work to do in them. I think that God does give us the desires of our hearts and loneliness is a horrible thing but so many people try to give God a hand and date a Hagar and create an Ishmael marriage and then wonder where God was.

It can take time for God to set up the conditions needed in you and others in order to fulfil his promises. Have faith and be very patient.

Finally, why is there a gap often before we receive the promise?

3. IT PREPARES US FOR ETERNITY

We are very much focused on the here and now. We need help now we want to see that promise fulfilled this hour or by 6pm tonight at the latest but faith is the currency of eternity and faith is not built by seeing and touching but in times of trusting and waiting. In the wilderness the Israelites had the fire by night and the cloud by day. They received daily quail and bread from God but still did not believe.

If God were to appear here on stage once a year with cherubim and lighting and powerful winds surrounding Him and say “believe in me, I am God.” We would believe but we wouldn’t have faith. If faith is to be based on purely what we see and touch then when those things aren’t happening where is faith, that characteristic that God wants to grow in us to prepare us for heaven? God wants people, He wants to raise up and train up a people who will take Him at His word and believe Him. Jesus taught a lot about the need for us to learn the language of faith now to prepare us for what is ahead. He said if we learn to trust Him now and take Him at his word then in the end of the age some will be given 10 cities to rule, others 5 and still others Taihape. Faith is the currency of heaven and if you learn to trust him now it will set you up for the work He has to do for you later in life.

If you face a delay in getting your promise fulfilled but say Lord I will respond with faith and I will patiently endure then know that you are preparing yourself for the next millions of years.

To be honest every time I see a great sunset I think of the rapture and I think, Lord if it is today, I’m ready, but it hasn’t happened yet. It is promised but hasn’t happened so do we give up or get a casual attitude about it. No; we keep trusting God to come through on that promise and wait patiently because it is going to happen someday.

15. Then after Abraham had been very patient, he was given what God has promised.

This week take Abraham’s name out of that verse and put in yours. Don’t try to help God and force things to happen.

Believe Him, and be patient, God is very much at work in the gap between the promise and the realization of the promises that He has made to you!