

Waiting on the Lord in Tarsus

Acts 10

Introduction:

1. One of the hardest things in life to do is to wait. Our fleshly human nature despises waiting.
2. Yet, waiting is a vital part of the Christian life. Over and over again we see examples of this in the Bible. Here are just a few:
 - David – Psalm 27:13-14, 40:1
 - The apostles – Acts 1:4
 - Church-age saints – 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:5
3. We are, by nature, impatient people (some of us are worse than others).
4. The apostle Paul had to go through one of those “waiting” time periods. After fleeing Jerusalem in Acts 9:30, Paul was sent to his hometown of Tarsus.
5. Paul is not mentioned again until Acts 11:25 when Barnabas brought him to Antioch to help in the ministry there. Paul had to wait for several years before he came back into the spotlight and his life’s ministry began.
6. The Tarsus experience is a preparation not easily accepted by the flesh, for it involves an indefinite waiting period. Think about it. Paul was, at that point, in possession of his gospel (he got it in Arabia), and was aware that it was to be the mission of his life to preach it to the Gentiles. Yet he had to wait a long time before his ministry would begin. This waiting period was probably five to eight years.
7. Why did Paul have to wait patiently in Tarsus? What was God’s purpose?

First, God made Paul wait to prepare him for an effective ministry to others.

1. Paul had a reputation as a brutal persecutor. Such a reputation does not fade quickly.
2. After his conversion, Paul had trouble finding acceptance from both believers and unbelievers. Acts 9:13-14, 22-29

3. Finally, Paul was sent home to Tarsus, apparently unwanted. Acts 9:30
4. Paul was simply too controversial a figure for the first several years after his salvation. Everywhere he went, he was a source of disturbance.
 - His wicked deeds as a persecutor were fresh on the minds of believers.
 - Unbelievers hated him because of his conversion to Christianity. He was seen as a traitor. They wanted to kill him.
 - After he was gone, things settled down. Acts 9:31
5. Paul could not have an effective ministry under these circumstances, and God knew it. Paul would have to go through a preparation time period. This would give him needed time to prove himself to others and build up the respect that he would need.
 - I'm sure Paul learned a lot during this time. I'm sure there were days that moved slowly as he waited. He may have wondered, "What is God doing?" But it gave Paul time to develop ministry skills and figure out how he would present his gospel to others.
6. This is an important principle that we see throughout Scriptures.
 - One of the qualifications of a pastor is that he not be a novice, but have a good testimony to others. 1 Timothy 3:6-7
 - A testimony doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. What does the word "testimony" infer? It infers time! It means that you have been living in a godly manner long enough for people to take note. It takes time before a person can be a leader.
 - Joseph waited for years before finally getting to the place where God could use him. He didn't know how the story would end, just being faithful and waiting, day after day.
 - Moses waited 40 years before God used him to lead Israel out of the bondage of Egypt. Can you imagine, 40 years tending sheep? Moses didn't look like a likely candidate to lead Israel out of the bondage of Egypt.
 - Elisha waited 10 years before beginning his public ministry.

- Jesus Christ waited 30 years before beginning His public ministry or doing His first miracle. Could He have started at age 20 or 25? He served in His earthly dad's carpenter shop until he was 30.
 - You must learn to wait. There is always a preparation time period.
7. What happens when we fail to understand this truth?
- We will push in doors that God has closed for the time being.
 - Instead of serving the Lord, we will only cause trouble for the Lord. One of the biggest sources of problems in churches are people who are immature spiritually, but are placed in leadership positions.
 - We will fail to learn important lessons that God wants to teach us as He prepares us to be used by Him. Trust me, there are many lessons to learn.
8. What was another reason why God had Paul wait in Tarsus?

Come back next week to find out.