

God Will Fulfill His Promises, But You Must Learn to Wait

The Bible is full of stories of men and women who waited and waited for God's promises to be fulfilled. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for Isaac's birth. Hannah endured years of barrenness waiting for her baby. David spent years in the wilderness before he became king.

God calls each of us to join Him in His work, but accomplishing anything spiritual—such as building a church, engaging in missions work or influencing secular culture for Christ—is impossible in human terms. We can't accomplish anything for God without faith.

God gives us a promise—that's the easy part. But faith is also warfare. The devil hurls doubts and obstacles in our direction. There are battles and, sometimes, casualties. And there are always, always delays. And it is in those painful times of waiting when we are most tempted to quit.

Zerubbabel and Joshua started restoring the temple of God in earnest, but they heard a familiar voice that whispered: "You'll never finish this. God is going to abandon you in the middle of this project."

Fortunately, just when the two men were about to throw in the towel, the prophet Haggai showed up with a refreshing announcement. He told them: "'But now take courage ... and work; for I am with you,' declares the Lord" (Hag. 2:4, NASB).

The Lord also promised He would see the building project to completion. He said: "The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former ... and in this place I will give peace" (v. 9).

Those prophetic promises propelled Zerubbabel and Joshua forward. The words invigorated their weary faith and steeled their determination. Their passion was refueled. Their hands grew strong again and they returned to the work. God's glorious house arose from an ash heap.

This is God's promise to all who are called to labor with Him. He doesn't tell you to begin something and then leave you halfway through it.

The apostle Paul knew this when he wrote: "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). The Message Bible says it this way: "There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears."

Many of God's servants today are weary. The devil is busy trying to abort God's promises. You may have been tempted even this week to resign from your assignment. But I want to encourage you with the words of Haggai: "Take courage! The Lord is with you!"

Whatever request you have brought to the Lord, and regardless of how many times you have reminded Him of it, keep these points in mind as you trust Him for an answer:

1. The work of God takes time.

Most people in the Bible who asked God for big things waited a long time to receive their answers. Abraham turned gray waiting for his promised heir—and he is called the father of our faith. Prayer is not magic. Our job is to ask, not to dictate or control. Let God be God. Let patience have its perfect work. We will eventually reap if we don't grow weary.

2. Authentic prayer involves a holy process.

Prayer is often compared to birth. When God gives you a promise, you essentially become pregnant with it. If you plan to carry this promise to full-term, you must travail. The prayer of faith does not always trigger instant answers. While God can certainly answer immediately, frequently He calls us to carry a promise until we are mature enough to handle the answer.

3. You have a Helper who is praying for you.

You are not in this process alone. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, Paul wrote, “with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). He is praying the perfect will of God, and we are invited to agree with Him. This kind of gut-wrenching prayer is messy; it is not formal or sophisticated; when we truly pray in the Holy Ghost we surrender our agendas and let Him pray through us. And this takes us deeper with God.

Jesus said: “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matt. 7:8). The verbs used are Greek present imperatives, meaning constant asking, seeking and knocking. Prevailing prayer requires persistence, but when we feel too weak to press forward in faith the Spirit provides the extra push.

You may be asking for the salvation of a wayward child, the funding of a ministry, the reconciliation of a relationship, the recovery of a business, the reviving of a stagnant church or the healing of a sick loved one. Keep on knocking. Don’t give up. You’re closer than ever to a breakthrough.

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