

Delays, Detours, and Denials
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Open your Bibles to Exodus 13:17-22: *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.* “Detours, Delays, and Denials” – I could put another “D” for disappointments. We will just start with the three: detours, delays, and denials. As we read the text a while ago, there was one thought that surfaces in those four verses. That was the thought that God leads. He leads. Every three and a half million slaves leaving Egypt, going out into a howling wilderness uncharted, untrod, and unknown to them – God led them that way. If you want to understand how they describe the wilderness, listen to what Moses said in Deuteronomy 8:15: *Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; God took care of them.* What a place – the *terrible wilderness!* You and I have no idea what will transpire tomorrow to you, to me, or in this world. You have not been this way before. Nobody else has. You cannot find your way. God promises to lead and to guide us through this world. The cloud is gone; but not His presence or His care. He dwells within us and the person of the Holy Spirit instructs us with His word; but He uses circumstances of detours, delays, and denials oftentimes to guide us in our life. It would behoove us to pay attention to how He deals with us. He does not give guidance that confuses us. He is not frustrated. He is not like the mother that gave guidance to her children. A frustrated lady lived in Darlington, Maryland; she was a mother of eight. She came into her house one day from the neighbor’s house, and her house seemed awfully quiet. She walked across the street. When you have children around you and everything is quiet, you had better look out. Curious, she peered through the screen door and saw five of her youngest children huddled together concentrating on something. She kept getting closer trying to discover what in the world they were looking at. She could not believe her eyes. Smack dab in the middle of the circle were five baby skunks. She screamed at the top of her voice, “Quick, children, run!” Each child grabbed a skunk and ran. Now, that is frustrated instructions; they grabbed the wrong thing. God is not frustrated about something that happens suddenly.

Notice God’s direction. He has a purpose in His delays, His detours, and our denials. He is trying to make us quick to be sensitive to His leadership. He said in Psalm 32:8: . . . *I will guide thee with mine eye.* My dad gave a whole lot of instructions and leadership with his eye. If I did not pay attention to his eye, I found his hand guiding. God guides us tenderly with His eye. What happens to us is not an accident. There are no accidents in the Christian’s life. God is not the cause of everything, but He is the Director. Paul writing to the saints at Rome talked about their tribulations and their trials. He said that there was a purpose in them. He said in Romans 5:3-5: *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations . . . (Do we enjoy trouble? No.) . . . knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* Now, this message came to me out of an incident that happened in my life on Monday and Tuesday of this week. Let me say that this audience this morning seems kind of tired and drowsy. I think it would behoove you to ask the Lord to help you wake up. I have a message.

When I preach the Word, there is always a message. I have something to help you this morning, and Satan and the flesh will rob you. I flew to Raleigh, North Carolina. I am on the committee of International Conference on World Evangelism. I was supposed to be up there early Tuesday morning. I went up Monday night so that I would not have to get up so terribly early to make it to the meeting. Well, I flew to Raleigh on Monday. I got there, and we were delayed in parking. We had to wait until they got out. I was supposed to have a complimentary limo from the hotel. It was not complimentary. It was thirty dollars. I had a long opportunity to talk to the driver. I talked to him about the Lord. He happened to be black. I started off on the Olympics and how a lot of blacks did tremendous things, such as the Dream Team. I talked about that, and it got his attention. Then, I talked about the Lord. He was silent. He looked in the mirror and listened to me. We got to the hotel, and he went in. They put it on the hotel bill and made arrangements for the next day to pick me up at 2:00 P.M. He said, "I will be here five minutes till two to pick you up." The clerk behind the desk was there. Well, the next morning at 11:30, we were supposed to have an executive meeting and then we were to have lunch. I arrived there before 11:30; but there was not an executive meeting. We had preachers that had come in from across the country for the meeting. Well, we stood around and talked till about 12:00, and then we ate from 12:00-1:00. About five minutes after 1:00, we went into another room. We sat down, and the meeting began. Well, I was supposed to be gone at 2:00, and it was about 1:10. I said, "Did I just come up here to eat dinner? I could have found some other place." I listened to the meeting, and it really never got cranked up. My plane will not wait on the meeting, so I got up and went over to the place where the parking transportation was. There was a limo there, but somebody else was in it. There was another one, and I thought maybe that was it. I sat and I waited and waited. The guy started to drive off, and I said, "Hey, are you going to the airport? I have reservations at the airport." He said, "I do not have any reservations for anybody from here." He was going the other direction. I went into the office of transportation and told them that I had reservations for 2:00. He asked me some questions then called the hotel. Somebody was passing the buck. He called the man that picked me up. One passed it off to the other one; but nobody put reservations down that they were supposed to pick me up. They told me they would. They understood. I do not know who was responsible, but somebody did not do it. I am sitting there wondering what is going on. He said, "The main thing that we have got to do is get you to the airport." I said, "That would be suitable to me. That is why I came in here." He called a taxicab. He was just around the corner, and they used him because he was close. He pulled up in a rather old car. It did not have an air conditioner in it. That was all right; we had the windows down. I was wondering if I just flew up here to each lunch. That was pretty expensive. I could have gone to the best place in town in order to do that. I began a conversation with him by asking him if he was saved. He said, "I have been working on that for two months." I said, "Thank you, dear Lord, it is all right if I miss the plane. I leaned up to the man with a hungry heart and talked to him. He had gone to church and went forward. He was looking for some dramatic thing to hit him. I went through the plan of salvation sitting in the back seat with my elbow over the front seat talking to a man that was interested. We were going in and out of traffic in Raleigh, North Carolina. I went through the plan of salvation. This man had a hungry heart. He wanted to know. He wanted to know. I went through the plan of salvation. I said, "Sir, if you really want to receive Christ as personal Saviour, do you understand?" He understood he was a sinner, and that was the reason he was hungry. I just had to explain. I said, "Will you give me your hand?" Now, we were in traffic, and he was driving. He turned loose the wheel, and gave me his left hand. I shook hands with him and led him to Christ right out in the middle of traffic. I did not care if I made the plane or not. I believe God sent me to Charlotte — to the place wherever I went. I went up there. Jay Harvey, Jack's son, came along while I was sitting there. Jay was also in the meeting had left ten minutes after two to go to the airport. He saw me, and I explained. He asked me if I wanted to ride with him, but I told him no I was supposed to ride here. I needed to be taken to the airport; that was why I paid these people to take me. It is the part-Jew in me. Are there any Jews in here? Well, Lord bless you. So, I rejected that offer. In all these detours, delays,

and denials, I got to lead a man to the Lord. I could have gone with Jay. I could have gone with that other fellow. This fellow's name was Charles. Charles was black. It does not make any difference. I said, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord, that this did not work out." God happens to be in control. It is His time and program. We get into trouble when we wonder what we are going to do. God is running the show. Now, when we get a hold of the fact that God is running the show, then life has meaning, and we try to pay attention to how God is trying to say something to us. God's detours – we read it in Exodus 13. God sent them on a detour because He wanted to protect them from the fact that they might see war. They were not ready for war. They would have turned and gone back into Egypt, back into bondage – God's detours. Detours appear suddenly and without warning. It slows down our schedule. I was going down Florida Avenue the other day and ran into a detour. I had a dental appointment. That is a professional bore. I thought I would wake you up somehow. I went down Florida Avenue, and I had to go over here and over there. I got there, and I had to call my wife to tell her that there was a detour down there. Detours just appear. You are not expecting them. They mess up our time schedule. They slow us down. That may be a detour of going to the hospital. It may be cancer out of nowhere. It may be a heart attack. It may be a broken home or a loss of job. It was Job's day. Man, what a day Job's was! You had better believe it was some detour when you read about his life. Detours – how long are they going to be? You never know about detours. They do not just say, "Rest comfortably now. You will come out of here, so and so." It does not tell you that. It is unknown. It is generally rough. It is bumpy. You really have to pay attention to the signs, or you will mess yourself up. God led them the long way around. We like the shortcuts. We buy something, and we look at the instructions about how to put it together. We do not read them. We tear the box and put it together, and then we have four parts left over when we get it together. Why? We are in a hurry. We do not have time to read the instructions. Give us a shortcut. That is what the devil tried to offer to Jesus, a short cut. "You do not have to go to Calvary. Take the shortcut." But God led them the long way around. It was a long way, too. It was forty years before they got around. That is a long, long detour. Dr. Roberson has a book on, *The Detours of Life*. The title came from an experience. He was in a revival meeting when he got a message that his daughter, Joy, had died. The following is the outline he put in his book: "First, There was a shocking call; our baby Joy was dead. Second, There was a lonely ride back to Chattanooga." His wife was in Chattanooga. "Third, There was a bridge over which I crossed; and by the crossing, something happened to my old heart and life. Fourth, there was a detour sign, a detour that troubled me and delayed me." His heart was troubled, and he was delayed. I heard him say personally that he was not in shape to comfort his wife, and God sent him around in the woods and so forth. Why? So he would be ready when he got home to be able to comfort his wife. "Fifth, There was a verse on that detour." God gave him his life verse. He had one, 1 Peter 2:21, but on that detour God gave him Romans 8:28: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* "Sixth, There was a funeral." God often speaks to His children in times of sadness. "Seventh, There was a lesson." A lesson on the frailty of life and the uncertainty of our days. "Eight, There was a work. God had something He wanted me to do. This could only be done through a certain lesson which He had to give me and that was the death of our baby." As a result of Camp Joy in Chattanooga, thousands and thousands of little boys and girls will be in Heaven because of a detour in God's man's life.

Consider our response to detours. Well, we can turn around and just go back the other way. Lots of times, God puts people on detours maybe because they do not like this road. They turn around and go back. We can gripe all the way through as the Israelites did. Or, we can accept them. I read in Philippians 1, about what Paul said. He was going to Jerusalem. He wanted to go to Rome. He did go to Rome, but he went to Rome in chains. He writes in Philippians 1:12: . . . *that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;* "Oh," he said, "God had a purpose in my life with the detours of life." Now, quickly, let me say this. Some of you went off to a business meeting or some meeting, such as a revival meeting or a

camp meeting. God spoke to you. God warmed your heart and challenged you. You went away with joy in your heart and came back to church resolved: "Man, I am going to live for God." God sent you on a detour, and you turned around and went back to the world. Go back to the world? Why? It was because something happened, and you did not like the detour. I repeat, detours are always bumpy and unexpected. None of them have ever been comfortable.

Let us look at God's delays. Turn to Acts 7. We do not like to wait. I read in Acts 7 about a man named Moses. Moses was being prepared and groomed by God to lead His people out of Egyptian bondage. God's watch care was over him from a little baby, and Pharaoh's daughter took that baby and reared him. God's hand was upon him. He saw his people suffering. I read in Acts 7:22-29: *And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.* (Moses did not stammer and stutter as somebody said. No sir, he was powerful in words and deeds. He was an orator. He was a speaker.) *And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.* For forty years, God's leader, God's man Moses, was delayed. Why? God's timing was not ready. God was dealing in patience with the Egyptians, and their cup of iniquity was not yet full. It took some 400 years before that cup was filled. Let me read that to you in Genesis 15:13-14: . . . *Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. Verse 16: But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* Moses, by an act of mercy and patience on Egypt and her sin, had not run out. When God's patience had endured with their sins and iniquities for 400 years, then God was ready. Sometimes we wonder, "Well, what is God doing?" You do not know what God is doing. You may have to go back three or four hundred years to decide what God is doing today. Egypt was not ready because God's timing of mercy had not expired. I read over in the book of Esther – this is interesting about timing – about a man by the name of Malachi – not Malachi, Mordecai. I got my names mixed up this morning. They were brothers, one of those "-i" boys. Mordecai saved King Ahasuerus' life when two men had plotted the death of the king, but nothing was done for him. This fellow Haman hated this Jew. Haman plotted and finally got it fixed so that he was going to hang Mordecai. He had gallows made. He put the gallows out in the courtyard. When they were in place, then I read: *On that night* (the night that the gallows were put there to hang Mordecai) *could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles . . .* If you cannot sleep, then read the history book. I saw a cartoon – I ought not to be taking time from this, but you need this. I saw a cartoon of a preacher standing at the bed of a couple of his members, a husband and wife in bed. The clock says 2:00 a.m. The preacher has got his Bible open, and the wife turns her head to her husband and says, "Isn't our pastor wonderful? When we cannot sleep, he comes over here and preaches to us." I did not say, "Go thou and do likewise." But, I read in the Book: *On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles . . .* He begins to read history. He found written where Mordecai had been the one who had saved his life and turned these guys in. They were guilty, and they were hung. *And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.* Back there he did something, and God was silent. God did not pay any attention, but wait. It was not the right time. The servant said nothing had been done for Mordecai. The king said, "Is

that right?" Verse 4: *And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.* If you do not believe in God's timing, read the book of Esther. Haman came in to get permission to hang Mordecai. The king was reading the history book that tells about Mordecai being his friend. The gallows were there to hang Mordecai. Verse 6: *So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?* Haman could not think of anybody more deserving than himself. So, he really laid it in the king's lap. He said, "I tell you what . . ." Verses 8-9: *Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.* The king said, "Haman, you get to it." What happened? Haman was hung on the gallows that he had made for Mordecai. Mordecai did something back there, and God did not seem to pay attention that Mordecai had done something to protect the life of the king. Now Mordecai's life is in danger. What happened? God's timing was not ready. But on that night, it was all set up. Haman was there; Mordecai was there; the King was there; and the gallows were in place. Sometimes, God delays because it is not time for judgment.

Consider something else about God's delays. The people were not ready to leave Egypt. How do you get three and a half million people to move? Try to get people in Lakeland to leave their homes and move. It was not rough enough. Look at it. When they got out in the wilderness – let me read it to you. You just listen. I have got enough to preach until 3:00. You do not have time, and I do not have time. I do, too. When the Egyptians were pursuing them, listen to what they said. Exodus 14:12: *Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.* He was trying to get these people to go out into the wilderness. God had to allow it to get very severe before they would leave. They were not ready. It took 400 years, and they put everything in the world they could on the Israelites. God said, "I will deal with them. But wait a minute. I will deal with them, but I am going to take my people out. That is the only way in the world to get them out." God has a reason for His delays. Egypt was not ready. God's timing was not ready because judgment was not ready and because the people were not ready. Then again, Moses was not ready. He had no commission. God did not tell him to do that. God was not in it. He was not ready in his spirit when he killed that man. He fled from Pharaoh. God gets Moses ready, and Moses goes in to Pharaoh and says, *Let my people go . . .* Moses was not ready because he thought he could do it. "I will do it one at a time." God put Moses in the backside of the wilderness. Somebody said he went to Egypt to learn to be somebody, and God sent him into the wilderness to learn to be nobody. When God taught Moses that he was nobody, Moses found out that God was everything. When Moses stood before Pharaoh, all he had was a dead stick. His education prepared him to be equipped, but it was not with his power that he went in unto Pharaoh. It is interesting to read that the people are now ready, that God is ready, and that Moses is ready. I read in the book of Exodus. Listen to this. Moses, where art thou? Acts 4:29-5:1: *And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped. And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go . . .* God has a reason for His delays. The people were not ready. Egypt was not ready. God was not ready. Moses was not ready. God has a reason for His delays. Now how do you apply that? Well, stay in school. "I want to get out of school." Yes sir, sometimes God will call them to preach, and they just want to get out and preach. You are not ready. Now sometimes God

does that, but that is the unusual. Get ready. God called me to preach. I spent six years in school. A lot of people can go to hell in six years, but I was not ready when God called me. Stay in school. Finish your education – reading, writing, arithmetic, literature, and science. “I do not like that.” It does not make any difference whether you like it or not. Learn it. You will use it. Stay in school. You want to take the shortcut? Let me tell you something else. Stay home. Sometimes things come between parents and children. The child will say, “Well, I am going to get me an apartment.” You need an apartment as much as a billy goat needs to run in the Kentucky Derby. Stay home. You need mom and dad. Mom and dad know that world out there. You do not know that world out there. You need their guidance. You need their counsel. “I am going to take a shortcut.” Stay home. Stay home under the authority and protection of your parents. Stay home. Today, you have to have everything NOW. I get angry at the world’s system. Let me tell you something else. Stay pure. Wait for marriage. Would you listen? God put the sexual relationship in the confines of holy matrimony. All right, you are not ready for sexual experience unless you meet certain qualifications. Being a boy and a girl does not qualify you, nor being two men does not qualify you. What qualifies you for sexual experience? A commitment to the one that you are going to have the experience with, a commitment for life. Are you ready? This is not a play thing. This is not a fun thing. This is a reproduction of the human race, and in a sexual experience, you bring forth a being that will live forever. Forever. For a sexual experience, you have to be committed to that partner for life. It is not for you. If you are not a person who is committed to your off-spring that will come out of a sexual relationship, you are not ready. 1 Timothy 5:8: *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* He that careth not for his own is worse than an infidel. You are not ready. You are going to have children out of wedlock, and then they are yours. They are your responsibility to feed, to clothe, and to guide. You are not ready. “Oh, I am thirteen.” Yes, sir, you are not ready. You are committed. Why? You are the high priest of the home, and you do not even have family devotions. Listen, girls. You had better pick somebody that is more than macho. You had better pick a guy that is spiritual, or he will break your heart. He will not take his responsibilities. God said in Exodus 20:14: *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* That is protection in that home. You talk about this sexual business. It makes me angry. You tell these little boys and girls about sex. They are not ready for that stuff. What are they doing? They are pushing them into sexual relationships by their teachings, and these little boys and girls are not ready for that. They destroy a generation of young people. They are not their friends. Young people, you are not ready. Keep your hands off of each other. You have no business to arouse sexual desires if you are not ready. Stay put. You say, “I am just over-sexed.” No, you are just under-controlled. I do not care what they tell you. You cannot exercise self-control by yourself. God said of this matter in 1 Corinthians 7:9: . . . *for it is better to marry than to burn.* If you cannot control your sexual desires, then get married. But, if you are not qualified to get married yet, then you are just going to have to control your passions. We have got this younger generation trying to say, “Well, the generation before did not have sexual desires.” They had sexual desires, but they had self-control. God delays financially. Have you got money to pay for an apartment? Do you have a job? Can you buy groceries? Can you buy clothes? All this goes with this sex deal. Let me repeat again. It is not a fun thing everybody is doing. Hebrews 13:4: *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* I think all of you are awake by now. You are not ready spiritually. You are not ready to love your wife as Christ loved the church. You do not love that girl; you love her body. If you love that girl, you would not take advantage of her. Girl, if you love that guy, you would not arouse his passions outside the bonds of matrimony. It is not right. I see people pushing their children in the dating game. Hey, you are not ready. I see mothers courting for their children, trying to match them. Listen, you need to let the man do that. A man will never push his daughter onto a guy, but a woman will. You hike up their dresses and try to court with them. Let me tell you something. Young men, would you listen? If you marry a girl that the mother courted you for her girl, the mother will be in your marriage the rest of your life to make sure everything is all right with

her girl. She will meddle in your marriage like everything. You had better drop her like a hot potato. John Mark was not ready. You say, "Why is that?" John Mark grew up in a godly home. There was a prayer meeting at his house. They were praying for Peter to get out of jail. Peter knocked on the door – the Scripture says – at John Mark's home. "Oh man, I am going to serve God. Man, He gets you out of jail when you get in trouble." What happened? The next missionary journey, John Mark went with them. He did not get anywhere until he was back home. He had not counted the cost. You are not ready for the service of our Lord until you count the cost. He tells you the cost. It is not going to be easy, but it will be glorious. Count the cost. He did not count the cost, and he went back. Years later, he is ready. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:11: . . . *Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* I am seeing how much I can cut out. I have put too much in, but I am going to finish.

Consider God's denials. When God says, "No," He may detour you. Detours will get you back on the main road. Delays take a while to get going. But, when God says, "No," that is it. David had a great desire to build the temple. The Scripture talks about it. He prepared and planned. He even talked to the prophet about it. The prophet said, "Go to it, buddy." God appeared unto him at night and said, "No, you are a man of war. I do not want my temple associated with a warrior. I want it associated with a man of peace. You cannot do it, but your son can. David, it was good that it was in your heart, but you have shed blood. I do not want blood shed in my house. It is a house of prayer to all nations. You have shed the blood of many nations in combat, fighting the Lord's battles, but when they think of the temple, I want them to think of the God of the nations and the prayers of all people."