Lesson #42 *Danger: Delayed Obedience* Nov. 11, 2026

Gen. 24:29-48 The servant recounts how God guided him to Rebekah, describes Isaac's status as heir and asks for their consent to take her back to Canaan as Isaac's wife.
Gen. 24:50-51Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceeds from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. 51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.
Gen. 24:52-54 The servant worships the LORD, gives gifts to Rebekah, her brother & mother.
54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

Gen. 24:55 And her brother and her mother said: "Oh, not so soon! Let Rebekah stay with us for a few days, ten days at least, before she goes away from her home."
Gen. 24:56 And he said unto them, "Hinder Me Not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master."
Key: No one or anything must be permitted to hinder the Spirit in His work.

"... seeing the Lord hath prospered my way." Up to this point everything indicated that the Lord had been leading every step of the way. True spiritual discernment will be quick to recognize God's leading in any particular work and will be careful not to spoil that work either by mere activity of the flesh on the one hand, or by spiritual apathy on the other.

"... that I may go to my master." The servant's business required that he return to Abraham with a bride for Isaac. Nothing must be allowed to hinder that business.

- The Holy Spirit's business is to return to the God The Father with the Bride for the Son, Jesus Christ.
- Our responsibility is not only to be sure that we do nothing to impede His business, but that we do everything to assist it.

Perils of Partial Obedience

Gen. 12:1 "Now the Lord HAD SAID unto Abram, Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land [inheritance] that I will SHOW YOU.
Gen. 11:31 And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and DWELT there.

Perils Of Partial Obedience: He obeyed the 1st command but failed the other 3 commands.
1. He left Chaldea, but Terah, his father and Lot, his nephew, accompanied him.

- Terah = delay - Having Terah resulted in a delay of at least 5 years in Haran
- Haran = parched; sparse

Note: Instead of journeying to Canaan, Abram tarried at Haran.
It was not until after Terah's [delay] death that Abram left Haran and came into Canaan.
Note: It was DEATH of the Delay that broke the link which bound Abram to Haran.

Living in Haran: Born again; Delay Sanctification; Sparse Abundant Life
Many people seem to be in the same situation Terah and Abraham found themselves.
Many people hear and respond to God's prompting:
Move out from their respective "Ur of the Chaldeans" into the land of Canaan,
but one way or the other, they settle down in Haran and totally lose the vision of Canaan.
Realize: Where you are at the moment is Haran not Canaan. The destination God is taking you to is much bigger than what you've settled down for. If Abraham had stayed put in Haran, he would have lost his glorious destiny forever. He would have lost his place in God's eternal plan.
You can't afford to accept less than God's best for your life. To accept Haran as your permanent dwelling place is to rob yourself of the unending joy of Canaan.

- Never accept less than God's best for your life, don't settle down in Haran!

Gen. 12:4 "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."

Consider: Abram is in the land, but he is still learning the conditions of life in the land.
He is like any new Christian who is now "in the Spirit" [Rom. 8:9]
but has not yet learned to "walk in the Spirit." [Gal. 5:25]
Common at this stage: The Failure Of Faith
I. Leaving Canaan and Going Down Into Egypt
Gen. 12:9-10 So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South. Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine *was* severe in the land.

- When the famine overtook Abram, his face was already toward Egypt.

Note #1: 1st mention in Bible of Egypt = that which is a constant menace to the people of God.
Symbolizes alliance with the world and reliance upon the arm of the flesh.
Isa. 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, *and* rely on horses,
Who trust in chariots because *they are* many, And in horsemen because they are very strong,
But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD!
Going down to Egypt = adopting the attitudes, expectations and resources of the world >
drinking from a dry cistern
Note #2 The famine was sent as a trial of Abram's faith. Famine in the Land Of Promise!
Question: Will the famine shake Abram's confidence in God's goodness? Will it shake his faith?
Abram took counsel, not from God, but from his fears alone.
Remember: The land is a symbol for the Spirit-filled life.

- A famine in the land is any circumstance that threatens our dependence upon him.
- It is any circumstance that makes faith difficult to maintain.

Have you been "living and walking in the Spirit" knowing God is your strength… suddenly,
A circumstance beyond your control threatens to shake your faith and your dependence on God?
There is a famine in your land! Tempted to flee rather than yield to God's purpose in the trial?

Ridout: "Alas, Abram did as we are all prone to do, he sought relief from all his difficulties, rather than profit by the trial." He could not yet trust God enough to stay in Canaan with the famine. This shows the weakness and failure of man to live up to God's requirements."
Consider: Did Abram seek counsel from the LORD? Abram was prompted by the
WISDOM OF THE FLESH > Relief in human help > ANYTHING but from the living God.

Consider: Abram had journeyed all the way from Chaldea to Canaan on the bare word of Jehovah and was now afraid to trust Him in the time of famine.
SAD: We have Faith in God with regard to our eternal destination,
but we are afraid to confide in Him for the supply of our temporal needs.

Foolishness of Egypt: When Abram's faith wavered, he also lost his courage!
Even before he got into Egypt, he grew afraid and acted cowardly.

- In Egypt, he relied on his own resources to defend Sarai. He lied in order to deceive.
- In Egypt, the old man will rise up and assume control.

Abram became a curse instead of a blessing. "His life of hypocrisy and weakness was a stumbling block and a plague upon the hearts of those who were watching him."
Egypt: place of rebuke and humiliation. Abram, the man of God, stood before a pagan king who had better morals than he. He was publicly rebuked for his folly.

Steadman: But now God terminates the painful lesson of Egypt in Abram's life.
"Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had." What a price to pay for the release from pressure that Egypt affords.
At the deepest moment of his agony, crushed with humiliation and sick at heart, Abram comes out of Egypt, tarred and feathered and riding on a rail, back into the land of Canaan."

Gen. 13:1, 3-4 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. **3** And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, **4** to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.
Question: How many times have you returned to your "Ai" – your heap of ruin?
Note #1: His journey in Egypt was so much lost time!
Note #2: He returned to the very place he had left. He repented and "Did The First Works."
Back in the land, he finds the fullness of supply that was his all along! As soon as Abram is back in the land, there is the tent and the altar again and he calls upon the name of the Lord.

The Bible's narratives describe people who resisted, hesitated, lingered, or obeyed only after consequences forced them to reconsider.

Lot Lingered Before Leaving Sodom

Message from angels: Leave Sodom immediately! Judgment is about to fall!

Gen. 19:15-16 Lot lingered! The angels took hold of his hand and the hands of his wife and daughters and brought them out.

Key: The danger was urgent. The instruction was clear. Leave before destruction comes!

- Yet he struggled to act.
- The angels' intervention demonstrates the seriousness of his hesitation & God's mercy toward him.

Clear example of Disobedience: After leaving, Lot's wife looked back despite the warning and became a pillar of salt [Gen. 19:17, 26].

Note: The lingering and the direct violation of the command reveal their attachment to a corrupt environment that God was judging.

Delayed obedience can damage credibility. When Lot warned his sons-in-law, they thought he was joking [Gen. 19:14]. His influence within the city was evidently weak.

Truth: Delay and divided loyalty can make a person's warning less persuasive to others.

Israel Delayed Entering the Promised Land

The Valley of Eschol takes center stage on one of the Old Testament's saddest days.

The 10 spies traveled about 500 miles during the 40 days of the survey of Canaan, but they discovered nothing that God had not already told them.

Report: It is a good land that flows with milk and honey, BUT there are giants, large, fortified cities and powerful "ites." The people were filled with fear as they listened.

John Gardner: "We are continually faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems."

Num. 13:31-33 But the men that went up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people; And they brought up an evil report of the land…

Peterson Simbotwe: Any report that creates hopelessness, fear and causes people to doubt the authenticity of the already spoken word of God, is an evil report.

Num. 13:26-33 They weighed their options & decided that the cards were stacked against them. Things were not the way they had first appeared or how they expected.

Consider: Living by sight puts the burden on you. Living by faith rolls the burden on God.

Recall: The negative report of the 10 spies HINDERED God's command to go in and possess the land.

Delayed obedience is disobedience. Causes of delayed obedience:

1. They murmured and complained. They questioned God's motives.

Deut. 1:27 And you murmured in your tents and said, Because the LORD hated us,
He hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt,
to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.

2. They were filled with fear.

Deut. 1:28 Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying,
The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven;
and moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.

- Confidence comes, not from great assurance in your ability or the facts of your circumstances. Confidence comes in trusting God.
- If you are doing what God has led you to do,
you don't have to worry and fret over the results.

3. They delayed their obedience because they did not believe.

Deut. 1:32 Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God,

Biblical Truth: Delayed obedience is disobedience and disbelief.

Consequences of evil report: 10 spies died. They mourned bitterly. Chastened by the death of the 10 spies, they now tried to go into the land in their own strength.

Deut. 1:43 So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill.

1. God will not be with you, but they did not listen. Terrible defeat
2. Their confidence was in themselves, not God.

Their first response was unbelieving refusal. This attempt was presumptuous action. They tried to claim the result of obedience without accepting the timing and conditions of God's command. The consequences included:

- A missed opportunity to enter the land with God's direction.
- Forty years of wilderness wandering.
- The death of the unbelieving generation.
- Military defeat when they acted on their own terms.

This account corrects the idea that a delayed response can always be repaired simply by doing the right action later. Obedience involves trusting God's command, timing, and direction—
not merely performing an action that resembles obedience.

Danger of Delayed Obedience

- We grow spiritually indifferent.
- Neglect doing what we know the Lord commands of us.
- Cooling of our heart occurs. Things of God become routine.
- Our desire for prayer, the Word, church and spiritual service are quenched.
- Go through the motions but lack spiritual life and growth.
- We grow to accept disobedience.
- We know where are not where we should be spiritually, but we make no effort to change.

Remedy: Painful repentance

Charles Spurgeon loved The Pilgrim's Progress so much he read it over one hundred times. It will challenge you to walk in the old paths and to be faithful in following the ways of righteousness and truth.

Hopeful came to faith in Christ by "the beholding of Christian and Faithful in their words and behavior." Bunyan adds for emphasis "in their sufferings at the fair." Their endurance through suffering demonstrated the true value and veracity of the gospel. Christ is a treasure worth more than all this world can offer—a treasure worth more than even life itself.

After a few minor adventures, Christian and Hopeful reach a sparkling stream, the River of the Water of Life, which meanders through beautiful meadows bright with flowers. After drinking from this "crystal river" their weary spirits are revitalized and refreshed. This represents a time in every Christian's life in which we encounter new discoveries of God's love, fresh manna from His word, and the sweet comfort of His Holy Spirit. In this meadow they lay down and slept, for here they might lie down safely. The path is soft and conveniently located next to the River of Life. It's easy to be faithful.

But unfortunately, such times don't last. Faithfulness is a hard thing to maintain. Staying on the pilgrim path is a great challenge for different reasons. What happened here? The condition of the road changed.
They became discouraged because of the difficulty of the way.
What was once smooth and pleasant, quickly becomes rough and painful.
As the road became more uncomfortable to their feet, they saw in the distance a stile that would take them over the fence and into a meadow in which there was a much smoother path on which to walk.

Bypath Meadow: A path that runs alongside The Way.
Assume it will merge with The Way at some place when the going gets easier.

- *Wishful thinking*

Christian: "It is just as I desired! Here is an easy-going way —
come, good Hopeful, and let us go over!"
Hopeful: "But what if this easy path should lead us out of the way?"
Christian: "That is not likely. Look, it goes right alongside our pathway."
So Hopeful, being persuaded by his fellow, left the path and followed Christian over the stile. Once in the meadow — they found it very easy for their feet.

When Christian saw the path and how pleasant things appeared to be, he said to Hopeful, "This is the way I want to go." Isn't that one of the main reasons we go astray? The way of righteous perseverance sometimes becomes difficult and discouraging.

When this happens, we decide to take a bypath and go "the way I want to go."
This is a sure step out of the old paths. Whenever we put our wishes ahead of God's wishes, we are headed for difficult times, and we are departing from God's ways.

As they are walking in the path they chose, they encounter Vain-Confidence who says he is bound for the Celestial City and knows the way perfectly.
Christian: Look, did not I tell you so? Now you see we are in the right path.
Vain-Confidence is not a trustworthy guide. He went before them to lead the way, but night approached and it grew very dark. They could no longer see Vain-Confidence who had fallen into a deep pit which was made by the prince of ByPath Meadow to catch vain-glorious fools.
They called after him, but there was no answer. He was dashed into pieces with his fall.
Christian and Hopeful retreat, but as they can see nothing in the dark, they decide to lie down in the meadow to pass the night.

Self-Confidence When we turn away from God, we turn to ourselves, often with full confidence that we are right, that we know what we are doing and where we are going. We are therefore asserting our self-confidence. So with 100% surety, Self-Confidence tells Christian and Hopeful that this path leads "to the Celestial Gate". Of course, it does not and neither do the ways of self-will, self-reliance, self-promotion or self-exaltation.

In her devotional commentary on The Pilgrim's Progress, Cheryl Ford says,
"Seeing a strong believer like Christian succumb to the temptation first to leave the Way and then presumptuously to rely upon Self-Confidence should cause us to be ever mindful of our desperate need for God's guidance and grace. We should guard our hearts from complaining about hardships. A humble song of praise will serve us much better than will peering over fences into forbidden places. Indeed, this spirit of discontentment is our constant enemy."

Sin has consequences and after Self-Confidence disappears, Hopeful asks the question,
"Where are we now?" It was obvious that they are lost and out of God's way of joy and peace.
ByPath Meadow is not the way of joy and peace. It cannot deliver what it seems to promise.
It began to rain — with thundering and lightening, in a most dreadful manner — and the water was rising around them.
Then Hopeful groaned within himself, saying, "O that I had remained on the way!"
Christian: "Who could have thought that this path would have led us out of the way?"
The answer: He should have thought so, but he was not careful,
and was blinded by his own pride, and lead astray by vain confidence.

Then, for their encouragement, they heard the voice of one saying
Jer. 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths,
where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

But by this time the waters had greatly risen — so the way of going back was very dangerous.
Then Christian realized that it is easier to go out of the right way — than to get back into it.
So they attempted to go back — but it was so dark, and the flood was so high, that they almost drowned nine or ten times. The floods represent the sorrows, distress and anguish that often accompany the consequences of our sin, even when we confess and seek forgiveness.
Neither could they, using all their skill — get back to the stile that night.

- We cannot return to the ancient or old path on our own.

At last, finding a little shelter — they sat down there.

- Being weary, they fell asleep until day-break.

Next morning, they are surprised and seized by the prince of By-path Meadow, a giant named Despair. Charging them with malicious trespassing, he hauls them to his stronghold, Doubting Castle, and throws them into a deep dark dungeon. He beats them almost senseless and advises them to take their own lives so that he will not have to come back to finish them off himself. The depth of such brokenness is portrayed in the allegory as a dungeon, a dark and unpleasant place, "nasty and stinking to the spirits of these two men." Their sorrow is lingering and lonely.

For four days they are confined without food or drink (to regain their strength) or light (to see and find a way out), or friends and acquaintances (to notice and take pity on them). Christian and Hopeful lie imprisoned in Doubting Castle because they were no longer looking to Christ and resting in His provision. They had looked to themselves to find an easier path. Even when they realized their error and sought to return to the Way, they failed, striving in their own efforts. "All the skill they had" was not sufficient to revive and restore them.

When all seems hopeless, Christian suddenly brightens up, "as one half amazed," and exclaims: "What a fool am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon when I may as well walk at liberty.
I have a key in my bosom called Promise which will open any lock in Doubting Castle."
The Key represents the "exceedingly great and precious promises" of the gospel—promises that are ours in Christ.

As Christian and Hopeful hasten to leave the castle, the loud creaking of the Gate arouses the giant. But when the giant attempts to pursue his prisoners, he falls into a seizure and cannot reclaim them. In the light of day, he [Despair] has no strength. Despair cannot endure when there is clear understanding and diligent application of God's Word.
We must look to Christ if we are to escape from Doubting Castle.
If we lose sight of Christ or depend upon anything but Him for help, Despair will find us again.

The prisoners are soon out in the open and running as fast as they can to get back onto the Holy Way, where they erect a sign warning other Pilgrims against being tempted by the apparent ease of traveling by way of By-path Meadow.
Rest for our souls will not be found in bypath meadow but only in Jesus Christ & in His truth.

J.C. Ryle The Old Paths "The longer I live the more I am convinced that the world needs no new Gospel as some profess to think. I am thoroughly persuaded that the world needs nothing but a bold, full, unflinching teaching of the "old paths." If those who hold Evangelical views were only more faithful to their own principles, and more bold, and uncompromising, and decided, both in their preaching and their lives, they would soon find...that they hold the only lever which can shake the world." May the Sovereign Lord of His church keep us in these old paths in these difficult days in which it is so tempting to turn aside after our own sinful ways.

Deut. 31:8 And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee,
he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.
Jer. 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths,
where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

Jim Elliot: "God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him."