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GOD'S WAITING ROOM: DISAPPOINTMENT IN HIS TIMING (Genesis 41:1)

Normally in our studies together we take a passage of several verses and walk through the lessons we find. In this study, though, we will only consider a small phrase because we all can relate to the first four words of Genesis 41 – “After two whole years.”

In our last lesson (sent to you by email on July 23, 2018) Joseph interpreted the dreams of a baker and cupbearer while imprisoned with them. Because he received his answer from God, he was correct that the baker would be executed and the cupbearer would be reinstated to his position. He asked one thing of the cupbearer, though. “Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house.” (Genesis 40:14) But in the last verse of chapter 40, we’re told that after the cupbearer was released from jail, he forgot all about Joseph.

Few of us know how to wait well. Our impatient tendencies are baked into our selves from birth and try as we may, learning the hard art of patience becomes a life-long pursuit, if one even attempts it.

That brings us to this painful phrase. Joseph languished for two more years, forgotten in prison. This presented several options – outright discouragement, anger at God, bitterness toward the cupbearer, and disillusionment with God’s plan. What would you have done? What should we keep in mind when we’re in God’s waiting room?

WE CANNOT SEE THE BIG PICTURE

At this point in his life, there’s no way Joseph could see the full trajectory of his life and neither can we. God’s timing rarely fits what we think is right, so coupling that truth with our impatient natures, the dilemma is obvious. Developing an abiding trust in God and his understanding of his purpose is crucial to emerging from a time of waiting in a healthy way.

Patience is a virtue of trust. To exercise trust implies that we are trusting in someone greater than ourselves. It is no wonder the world is so impatient. Those who do not know God can only trust in themselves, for there is no one greater in whom they can place their trust. Their confidence is self-confidence, their esteem is self-esteem, and their reliance is self-reliance... If we trust in ourselves, then we are a hopeless people.

- Burk Parsons -

WHILE WE WAIT, GOD WORKS

If you’re like me, you sometimes confuse action with effectiveness. But when God seems inactive to us or we go through a season of waiting, that doesn’t mean that significant things aren’t happening. We’re only aware of a few things going on at once while God is orchestrating ten thousand things that are leading to the carrying out of his plan.

Psalm 75:1, 2 - We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds. “At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity.”

[Patience is] a grace as difficult as it is necessary, and as hard to come by as it is precious when it is gained. You are always in a hurry, but God is not.

- Charles H. Spurgeon -

WAITING HUMBLER OUR HEART

There are lessons that you and I can only learn in God’s waiting room. It’s the fortunate person who God instructs through the difficult times of suffering that demand patience and trust. Our problem is that we think we know better and want our outcomes without

the inconvenience of waiting. Joseph surely struggled with understanding why it took two years before God seemed to answer his need. You can imagine the prayers he lifted up, yet God continued to make him wait. When we have to wait and have no control of our situation at all, it's humbling.

We forget that every difficulty is a message from God and intended to do us good in the end. Trials are intended to make us think – to wean us from the world, to send us to the Bible, to drive us to our knees. Health is a good thing; but sickness is far better, if it leads us to God. Prosperity is a great mercy, but adversity is a greater one, if it brings us to Christ.

- J. C. Ryle -

WAITING CAN DEEPEN OUR WALK WITH GOD

Rather than the negative options we listed in the introduction, it's possible to draw closer to God as a result of waiting. In fact, blessing is God's reward for waiting.

*Isaiah 30:18 - Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; **blessed are all those who wait for him.***

*James 1:2-4 - Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet **trials** of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, **that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.***

The word [patience] never means the spirit which sits with folded hands and simply bears things. It is victorious endurance (and) constancy under trial. It is the courageous and triumphant ability to bear things, which enables a man to pass a breaking point and not break, and always to greet the unseen with a cheer.

- William Barclay -

WAITING PREPARES US FOR "GOD'S NEXT"

God had some amazing things in store in Joseph's future, and God knew exactly what he was doing. As bleak as it looked for Joseph in prison, the very existence of the nation of Israel was going to be at stake and he would eventually be the one God would use to save them.

Patience is a vibrant and [strong] Christian virtue, which is deeply rooted in the Christian's absolute confidence in the sovereignty of God and in God's promise to bring all things to completion in a way that most fully demonstrates His glory.

- Albert Mohler -

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

One of biggest lessons we can take away from the life of Joseph and his time in jail specifically is that God keeps his promises. We already mentioned the burgeoning nation that came from Abraham would face extreme difficulty and Joseph would be key to its preservation.

*Hebrews 6:13-15 - For when **God made a promise to Abraham... saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you."** And thus **Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.***

Joseph emerged from his prison cell bragging on God. Jail time did not devastate his faith, it deepened it.

- Max Lucado -

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 153, House Office Building