

WHEN GOD MAKES US WAIT

TEXT: GENESIS 40

Introduction:

1. One of the most difficult things to do is to wait on God.
2. Christians are often perplexed. Why doesn't God move quickly? Why doesn't God answer our prayers right away?
3. Why does God seem to move slowly at times?
4. Sometimes it seems as if God is not moving at all.
5. There are many examples of this in Scripture (cf. John 11:1-6, cf. 11:21).
6. Why didn't our Lord heal Lazarus right away?
7. Why did he deliberately wait two more days, until Lazarus died?
8. We will not know all the answers to our questions until we get to heaven, but many things can be discerned from reading the Bible.
9. For example, God was glorified when Lazarus was raised from the dead (John 11:4, 30-46; 12:1, 2).
10. Oftentimes, we do not understand why God moves in such a mysterious way, but we must learn to trust God while we patiently wait.
11. *God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.* William Cowper

12. Our Lord said to Peter in John 13:7, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."
13. We can apply those words to our situation when we find ourselves puzzled at the providence of God.
14. This morning I would like to preach about Joseph. The providence of God is seen over and over again in the life of Joseph. You will recall that his brothers wanted to kill Joseph, but Reuben talked them out of it.
15. His brothers sold Joseph to a company of Ishmeelites, who in turn brought him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, and captain of the guard.
16. After working for a while in Potiphar's house, the LORD blessed Joseph. Potiphar recognized this and promoted Joseph to overseer in his house.
17. But by and by, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, and when he rejected her immoral advances, she falsely accused Joseph and he wound up in prison.
18. But Genesis 39:21 says, "But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison."
19. Now this brings us to Genesis 40. And my message is entitled, "When God Makes Us Wait."

I. GOD HAS A PERFECT SCHEDULE

1. God had a perfect schedule for Joseph, and God has a perfect schedule and a perfect plan for us (Jer. 29:11-13; Psalm 57:2; 138:8; Acts 15:18).
2. The Bible teaches us that God is sovereign. And that God is omniscient. And more importantly, the Bible teaches us that God cares for us.

3. Frank E. Graeff was a pastor born in 1860, in Pennsylvania, and died in 1919 in New Jersey.
4. By all accounts, Pastor Graeff was a happy, cheerful man of God, but there was a time when he went through a severe trial. During this time of trial and testing, he turned to the Scriptures for solace and strength.
5. First Peter 5:7 became especially meaningful to him during his trial -- "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7).
6. And it was during this period of great despondency, doubt and physical pain, that Frank Graeff wrote the words to this well-known hymn.
7. *Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth or song,
As the burdens press, and the cares distress
And the way grows weary and long?*

*Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.*

*Does Jesus care when my way is dark
With a nameless dread and fear?
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,
Does He care enough to be near?*

*Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.*

*Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed
To resist some temptation strong;
When for my deep grief there is no relief,
Though my tears flow all the night long?*

*Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.*

*Does Jesus care when I've said "goodbye"
To the dearest on earth to me,
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?*

*Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.*

8. The LORD cares. He cares for you, and He cares for me. And He certainly cared for Joseph (cf. Gen. 39:2, 21).
9. God cared for Joseph, and God had a perfect schedule for Joseph. Joseph may not have understood that when he was stuck in the pit, or sold into slavery, or falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, or thrown into prison.
10. Joseph had to stay in that Egyptian prison for two full years, but during that time the LORD never forgot about Joseph. And after two years, the LORD gave Pharaoh an unusual dream (Gen. 41:1).
11. When no one else could interpret the dream, Pharaoh's butler remembered Joseph's ability to interpret dreams (41:8-16).
12. Notice Joseph explained to Pharaoh that his dream was from God (41:16, 25, 32).
13. God had a plan for Joseph, and a plan for Pharaoh.
14. And God had a plan for Joseph's father Jacob, and for Joseph's brethren (Gen. 45:5-8).
15. And of course, God has a plan for this entire world. We must not be alarmed at all the turmoil in Egypt and Libya and all over the world, because God is in control.
16. This whole world is being prepared for the Battle of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ.
17. Are you ready? Because God has a plan. And God is never late. He is always right on schedule (cf. Gal. 4:4; John 14:1-4; Titus 2:13).
18. God cared for Joseph. God cared for Joseph's family. And God cares for us (cf. Romans 8:28-34; Psalm 57:2).

II. THE BUTLER FORGOT ALL ABOUT JOSEPH, BUT GOD NEVER FORGETS

1. In the providence of God, Joseph was in prison with two of Pharaoh's officers -- his chief baker and his chief butler.
2. And God gave Joseph the ability to interpret their dreams (40:7-23).

3. Joseph asked the chief butler to remember him, and to speak to Pharaoh in his behalf (40:14, 15).
4. "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (40:23).
5. The chief butler went back to work and forgot all about Joseph. But God never forgot about Joseph.
6. In fact, later on it was God who made the butler remember (cf. 41:9).
7. And it was God who caused Joseph's brothers to remember...and to repent (Gen. 42:18-24).
8. God was behind all of this.
9. God had great plans for Joseph, though Joseph would never have known this when he was in the pit or in prison (cf. 41:38-44).
10. God's plans for Joseph included a wife and two sons (41:45, 50-52).
11. Joseph was only seventeen years old when his brothers sold him into slavery (37:2).
12. Then he was falsely accused of attempted rape and thrown into prison.
13. But God never forgot about Joseph. Joseph said to Pharaoh's butler, "But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house" (40:14), but the butler forgot all about Joseph, and two years passed (41:1).
14. But God never forgot about Joseph. Joseph's ordeal in Egypt lasted thirteen years (cf. 37:2; 41:46).
15. Through all his trials and troubles, Joseph kept waiting on God. And so must we.
16. "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:14).
17. "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7; cf. 37:4, 5).
18. There are many, many Scriptures which enjoin us to wait patiently for God, but interestingly the Bible also says that the LORD waits for us (cf. Isaiah 30:18).
19. Isaiah 64:4 says, " For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."
20. Certainly that Scripture applies to all the wonderful blessings God had prepared for Joseph. And God has great blessings for us if we are willing to wait on Him.

III. WE HAVE TO TRUST GOD'S PROVIDENCE

1. Joseph came to understand this (Gen. 45:5-8; 50:20).
2. And we must too.
3. There are many examples of God's providence in Scripture.
4. Pharaoh's daughter just happened to be down at the river, and she just happened to see little baby Moses in his ark among the flags (Ex. 2:5).
5. Mordecai just happened to be at the gate when two of the king's chamberlains were plotting to kill the king.
6. And when Mordecai told Esther their plan was exposed and the traitors were hung. But no one told the king that it was Mordecai who saved his life.
7. Then later on, when wicked Haman was plotting the destruction of Mordecai and all the Jews, the king of Persia could not go to sleep one night (Esther 6:1).
8. C. H. Mackintosh said, "The most trivial and the most important, the most likely and the most unlikely circumstances are made to minister to the development of God's purposes. In chapter 39 Satan uses Potiphar's wife, and in chapter 40 he uses Pharaoh's chief butler. The former he used to put Joseph into the dungeon; and the latter he used to keep him there, through his ungrateful negligence; but all in vain. God was behind the scenes. His finger was guiding all the springs of the vast machine of circumstances, and when the due time was come, he brought forth the man of His purpose, and set his feet in a large room. Now, this is ever God's prerogative. He is above all, and can use all for the accomplishment of His grand and unsearchable designs. It is sweet to be able thus to trace our Father's hand and counsel in everything. Sweet to know that all sorts of agents are at His sovereign disposal; angels, men and devils—all are under His omnipotent hand, and all are made to carry out His purposes"
9. The Bible gives us many examples of the providence of God, and all are there to encourage us and to strengthen our faith -- Abraham's servant stood by the well and prayed for a wife for Isaac, and Rebekah just happened to come to the well at that very moment (Gen. 24:15).
10. Ruth just happened to glean in the field that belonged to Boaz (Ruth 2:3).
11. Psalm 32:8 says, "I will guide thee with mine eye." And the same God who guided David, and Abraham, and Abraham's servant, and Ruth, and Joseph, and so many others in the Bible, is the same God that leads us.

12. Sometimes we have to wait. Like the children of Israel following the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. In Numbers 9 we read that when the pillar of cloud stopped, the children of Israel stopped.
13. And when the pillar of cloud moved, they moved.
14. Numbers 9:22 says, "Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed."

CONCLUSION:

1. In his interesting commentary on the book of Genesis, AW Pink wrote these words: "That 'all things *work together for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose,' is writ large across our lesson. And well for us if we take this to heart. But the trouble is, we grow so impatient under the process, while God is taking the tangled threads of our lives and *making them* 'work together for good.' We become so occupied with present circumstances that hope is no longer exercised, and the brighter and better future is blotted from our view. Let us bear in mind that Scripture declares, '*Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof*' (Eccl. 7:8). Be of good cheer, faint heart; sorrow may endure for a night, but *joy cometh in the morning*. So it was with Joseph. For a season he suffered wrongfully, but at the last God vindicated and rewarded him. Remember Joseph then, troubled reader, and 'let patience have her perfect work.'"
2. Joseph learned to wait on God, and God rewarded Joseph's patience and faithfulness.
3. In fact, the names he gave his sons indicates Joseph's gratitude for God -- "Forgetting" (all his past troubles) and "Fruitful" (God made Joseph fruitful in Egypt). {Genesis 41:50-52}
4. Say not, my soul, "From whence
Can God relieve my care'
Remember that Omnipotence
Hath servants everywhere.

His help is always sure,
His methods seldom guessed;

Delay will make our pleasure pure;
Surprise will give it zest.

His wisdom is sublime,
His heart profoundly kind;
God never is before His time,
And never is behind.

Hast thou assumed a load
Which none will bear with thee'
And art thou bearing it for God,
And shall He fail to see? - J. J. Lynch