

**Reading:** Genesis 41:1-14

**Theme:** God's Timing for Our Lives.

Joseph had been unjustly thrown into prison, had been there some time when he interpreted the chief cupbearer and chief baker's dreams. The interpretations came true and Joseph asked the cupbearer to remember him, put a word in for him. Joseph tried to organise things his way and in his time. I wonder what would have happened if he had succeeded? Perhaps he might have been a free man and would have headed home. Or he may have become a dream interpreter and he would have had a good job in the palace or city. He may just have been released from prison, but sold again as a slave.

If he had headed home, he, his family, many Egyptians and others in that part of the world would probably have died. If he had a job as a dream interpreter, it is unlikely he would have received the great honour that he did. If he'd been sold as a slave again, he could have been anywhere and his whereabouts unknown when Pharaoh's dreams needed to be interpreted. See that it was not God's time or way for Joseph to be freed then; for him to have any authority. Joseph needed final preparation to be the man God wanted and is left in training in prison for a further two years.

Yet one morning God's right time came and Joseph's circumstances changed dramatically - he began his day in prison, in rags, unshaven, even in chains and ended it in authority, in the palace, dressed in fine clothes, clean shaven, but still in chains – this time a gold chain around his neck! Joseph is suddenly exalted out of the royal prison into the royal palace. Why? Because God's time had come and God worked to exalt Joseph. This is what Joseph's preparation had been for.

All the years of suffering, of hardship, of learning patience, to manage goods and people, learning of court protocol, of human nature, to trust in the Lord even in hard circumstances - all lessons were needed - **all** of them as he is thrust, under God's providence into the position of the second most powerful person in the land.

We may not realise it, but we have a remarkable comment on God and His gentleness with us. God is eternal, He is so great and is outside of time, but He allows Himself to be bound by time and therefore He shows us His gentleness. He lets Joseph's preparation go on over a period of some 13 years. Yes in His power, God could have prepared him in 13 hours, but He dealt gently with Joseph over this period of time - letting him learn the lessons, to grow, to mature and develop; He works in time even though to Him a day is as 1000 years and 1000 years as a day. God in His wisdom and love works in, links Himself to time as He stoops down to work in our realm of existence.

Even though God is outside of time, its seasons, yet the life-cycle of so many plants and animals show God's provision of time and seasons. An acorn doesn't suddenly spring up into a giant oak tree overnight, it takes time. The Bible says "*He has made everything beautiful in its time.*" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). How important we wait for God's time and way of doing things. We are often impatient, want to rush in, get on and have things done or sorted out quickly. Learn from Joseph and not want things in our own time, even if it appears to be good things - getting released, getting power and authority, gifts and blessings, but Joseph was not ready. We can want vindication for ourselves, to have this or that power or authority with many gifts and blessings before we are ready. We may feel it is the

way God **has** to do things, but He knows far better than us. It is far better to wait God's time - we will see it is the moment not only **we** have been waiting for, but wisely **God has too** - as His unseen working and plans comes to fulfilment.

We need to note the lesson that when God's time has come, our time has come and when it is not God's time, it is not ours! Joseph languishing in prison, waiting for his release, is left in prison until God's time came. Yes, God had chosen Joseph to do a great work, which history would record and admire, but he is kept waiting and for a long time as he is being prepared. If we had told him this, he would have been staggered *"I've had so much preparation, surely I don't need more?"* Joseph would have felt himself ready. Most of us would probably feel the same - we are ready for God's work and God's time now; feel we don't need more preparation because we are complete...

Joseph, as we saw with the dreams of cupbearer and baker, was still the manipulator, but God wanted Joseph utterly dependent on and cast upon God alone - no sign of hope or trust in self or his own abilities to sort things out. See quickly some ways in which we know God's time has come in our lives:

### **1. When We Come to An End of Our Own Strength.**

We all like to our own bit, to pull our own weight and it even spills over into spiritual things. When we are faced with a crisis, a trauma, or faced with our need to be right with God, we can feel that will be ok because we are strong, we are able, we are good enough and we have the experience of... These things mean that God's time hasn't come for us. Until we realise that we are not able, cannot do, do not have the strength or ability, are not good enough, then we will not trust in God for help, for

strength, for salvation or for His leading and guidance. While Joseph still struggled to free himself, he was left in prison until he realised that he had no hope but in God.

If we're honest, we all like to nudge the arm of Providence don't we! We like to try and advance ourselves along a bit. There's nothing terribly wrong in that - except we can feel that it is what we did or said that brought it about. Yes, God could have advanced Joseph in these means, but He chose not to. Joseph had been deliberately kept down even though, humanly speaking, what he tried should have worked. God was going to work in such a way that when Joseph was exalted it would dazzle and blow his mind. We sing the truth that we don't always fully understand or realise "*God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform*".

Our lives may be in turmoil over this or that matter, we may even be listening to this message and trying to gain acceptance with God by various means; we may be trying to get out of a disastrous situation and as we look around us we see that we failed miserably in all that we've tried. We need to look again and see God bringing us to an end of a trust in our own abilities. God wants our complete trust in working these matters out. Are we prepared to stop trusting in ourselves completely? If so, we are beginning to see something of God's time for our lives. We also see its God's time:

## **2. When God Works Outside Us and Our Influence.**

Joseph had worked, but failed. How was God going to exalt him? God did so by sending and giving Pharaoh dreams! Joseph could not influence top man Pharaoh at all, but God could work and reach this mighty ruler and so arrange things

that he was desperate for a true interpreter of dreams. It was God's time and He worked when all human resources would fail; when human endeavours and wisdom came to nothing. Joseph's dreams had caused his problems, but Pharaoh's dreams would cause his promotion!

Pharaoh had many magicians and wise men skilled in dream interpretations, but see what happens here with God in control - they all fail to interpret the dreams! It's amazing how God gave the dreams and hid, prevented the interpretation and no doubt this caused Pharaoh to be more anxious and agitated. God was working far beyond the realm of Joseph's experience or influence. There is no other explanation other than God's time had come to favour Joseph, but unseen God was at work, definitely at work.

We are to note how and where God worked - it was at the very point Joseph had tried to work and had failed – see who remembers Joseph now! It's the cupbearer - the butler really did do it this time!! Yet it's not because of Joseph's words, but because God brings the event back to remembrance. The same butler, two years later, knowing all the fuss in the court as the wise men were paraded before Pharaoh, knowing the situation, now goes and reminds Pharaoh of his own wrong and crime against Pharaoh and then of Joseph's interpretation of the dreams.

Joseph tried to vindicate himself and failed, but here we see God vindicating His servant in a remarkable way. Aren't such things so true of us as we try to influence people, events - so we plan, pray, are in the right place at the right time with the right words and we get nowhere. When it is God's time, He can easily work

and works often in areas we know we failed in, to show us that it is undoubtedly His work and His time. We have to realise He works in His time according to His timetable. We know God's time is come when:

### **3. When Someone Else Pleads Our Cause.**

It is not a case of pleading our own cause, justifying our actions, or condemning others as wrong. Joseph's case is spoken of - not because Joseph had influence or begged the cupbearer, but because he remembered, was prompted by God to remember the facts and tell them to Pharaoh. The two dreams and the correct interpretation spoke for themselves - these were told to Pharaoh. In God's time, the truth will be brought out – the good things we fear will never be recognised. The butler did here, but God was at work in these things and they were way out Joseph's hands or influence.

There may be times when we feel hurt, grieved at something that has been said about or against us, but in God's time the truth will out. We are not to seek vengeance self vindication - because we can do so for wrong reasons and motives. We are to commit our ways and fears to God's hands and to His way and time. A further evidence of God's time having come is:

### **4. When God Reaches Us Where We Are.**

Joseph was still in prison; he had tried to give things a hand, to get out by his own effort, but no joy. Then suddenly, when he may have given up hope of ever getting out, God reaches in and exalts him. Royal guards come to the prison *"Where is Joseph? Come on Pharaoh wants to see you."* They knew where to find Joseph. God knows where we are - in our distress, turmoil, in our need of forgiveness, in our need of salvation or restoration

to Him or in our need of His strength and grace. Do we feel insignificant, overlooked, uncared for? God knows where we are. He can suddenly reach down and do a great work for us – as in v14 *"he was quickly brought from the dungeon."*

We have said much about Joseph. What has been said applies to the gospel and to us becoming a Christian. We will not be saved while we think we can get by or we don't need God's total help. We need to see we are without strength *"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."* (Romans 5:6) We may be impressed by other Christians; may try to be better and improve in deed, word and even thought; try to curb our tongue or temper. We may have succeeded in part and be thinking *"Yes I am nearly ready to be a Christian"* but if we feel like that, I have to say *"Forget it!"* We are not ready until we see the hopeless and helpless situation we are in. Yet thankfully Jesus died for the helpless and hopeless. We are all that, but until we realise and recognise our need, until we realise, know we are helpless and hopeless apart from Christ and we can't do anything to make ourselves acceptable or right with God, we will **not** go to Him.

Here God works at the point we have failed. The Lord Jesus took our part, He stood in our place, He did what we could not do as He died in our place, took our punishment for our sin. We are not to compete with Him, but are to realise He did all that was necessary in our place. He pleads our case - He knows all the facts about us what we deserve God's punishment for, but He says that He suffered in our place.

God's time has come when we begin to realise something of this; for He is able and willing to come down to reach us in our

dungeon of sin and free us from it. He sees us there now and is able to free us if we confess our need of Him. When God comes in this way will know it is God's timing because:

### **5. Then We Are Made Fit to Stand before the King.**

Joseph wasn't fit to stand before Pharaoh. So, he was shaved and given different clothes. When God reaches in and rescues us from our sin dungeon, He cleans us up, changes our faces even - gives us a forgiven face, gives us the robes of righteousness - provided by the Lord Jesus and therefore makes us fit to stand before Him - the King of Kings.

Has there been this time of God's salvation coming to us? If there has, we can be sure He is working in us and will bring about these things in our lives. If we are Christians, then we are to use the means He has provided in our lives, in the life of the church and we are to use them, relying upon God and not merely the means that He has provided - because without His blessing we will not prosper in anything we do and we could be found to be running ahead of or behind Him. We are to commit our lives and times into His hands. Yes, we are to rightly use means, but we are to depend on Him totally to bring about those things that He knows are right and proper for us and to do so in His own time. I pray that we all would patiently wait and seek Him, His way and His time for our lives.