



DATE: February 8, 2009

TEXT: Genesis 41: 1-13, 25-41

TITLE: “Genesis XXV: The Working of the Lord IV”

We continue the story of Joseph. I remind you the story of Joseph takes 13 chapters in the book of Genesis. It is one of the longest historical stories in all of scripture. Chapters 37 to 41 of Genesis tells us of Joseph’s time in captivity and slavery. We are seeing how God takes an ordinary man and molds him into a great servant of the Lord. The story of Joseph is our story.

Oh, we will probably never be sold into slavery... but we will face our struggles in life. We will probably never become the # 2 official in the nation.... but we will have our times of triumph.

This is the final sermon in a 4 part series. We are seeing the working of God as he molds us into obedient followers. Allow me to just list the lessons we have seen up to this point

- God works in the lives of believers by providing blessings. In the good times of life we need to develop and maintain our habits of growth.... prayer, daily time in God’s Word, worship, fellowship, bible study, so we can gain maturity.
- The Lord gives us times of temptation for us to grow in our faith. Each person here faces temptations. We live in a world surrounded by sin... by the Power of the Holy Spirit we must resist the temptation.
- The Lord allows trials to come into our lives in order to allow us to grow into mature Christians. We all face difficult times. Know that in the midst of difficult times the Lord is with us.
- We grow in our faith by having a constant awareness of God’s presence and purpose for our lives. God does indeed have a purpose for our lives... and we need to have an

awareness of God's presence with us.

- We need to learn the necessity of overcoming selfishness during times of struggle. The natural tendency is to become self-centered in times of struggle. It is these times we must most concentrate on our ministry to others.
- We need to continually learn to discern the will of God in our life. We saw last week the tools God gives to us to discover His will... The bible, prayer, the church, brothers and sisters in Christ, and the miracles of God

This morning I am going to add to this list of lessons. Truthfully if we gain understanding and obedience to these lessons I truly believe we will become wonderful, mature followers of Jesus Christ. I will add 3 new lessons this morning.

Lesson # 1 To grow in our faith we must never forget others in need. This is related to my previous lesson on selfishness but this section of scripture reiterates the lesson. This is the lesson from the cupbearer. In *Genesis 41:9* he states....

Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. 10 Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. 11 Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. 12 Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream.

The cupbearer forgot Joseph for 2 years. He became so wrapped up in his good fortune..

He was so thankful that he had been released from prison and not executed... that he forgot to think of others.

We need to remember a truth... the path to Christian maturity always runs through someone else. You can have the greatest Christian habits in the world. You can go to church every Sunday, read the Bible every day, spend an hour in prayer every day, teach a Sunday School and still not discover the joy of Christian maturity. To truly be mature in Christ we need to learn servanthood. We need to serve other people. Jesus said these words in *Matthew 26*

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40"Then the King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

41"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44"Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

45"Then he will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

That is one thing I love about our church. So many people love to serve other people here.

Truthfully, you never see them. You probably don't even know they serve. Do you know we

have around 10% of our active congregation helping out in the ministry of our children and teen on Sundays and Wednesday. And I'll tell you... it's not always easy working with children who are active and hungry.

I don't know if anyone knows how active our deacons are... visiting the sick and shut ins. .. providing food to over 70 families in our community every month.... ministering to the men and women from our community in the armed forces....providing sermons and bulletins to our shut ins every week.... and I could go on and on. The many, many people who are active in ministries through the different committees. Our committee people directly minister. The Worship committee works hours after hours in this church.... the C.E Committee do hands on ministry almost every month... the evangelism committee visits and welcomes.... the mission committee directly does mission work. And then I could turn to our Woman's Association and all the ministry they do. I want to highlight one volunteer this morning. Nathan. Do you know Nathan spent over 50 hours last year installing our computer network. Every week Nathan does a wonderful job guiding the sound and video in our worship. Have you ever been to a seminar or a

worship service when the sound and video do not work? It is a disaster. Thank you Nathan.

Thank you to everyone who serves our church.

The lesson is this... Christian growth occurs when we remember to serve others. We are blessed. Financially we are blessed. Relationally we are blessed. Lifestyle we are blessed. Let us remember that 90% of the world does not have the blessing we have. Poverty rules much of the world. Remember the words of Jesus... “What we do to the least of these we do to the King.” Let us serve... those in our own community and those in the world.

Lesson # 2 As followers of Christ we must learn to wait upon the Lord. We just saw the cupbearer who forgot about Joseph for two years because he was absorbed in his good times....

think of Joseph for these two years. He remained in prison. *Beth Moore described this, this way*

Don't just think of Joseph waiting two years. Picture him waiting 730 days! When we're in waiting mode, one month doesn't feel like one anything. It feel every bit of 30 days. The sun rises in the morning, beams with noon day heat, and sets again in the evening every single day of our wait. Meanwhile, we can almost hear the echo in the hollow of a clocks relentless tick, “Nothing yet, Nothing yet.” Time can be a liar

Joseph waited for 2 years. Scripture tells us after 2 years Pharaoh had a dream. Do you know the question I asked myself when I read that sentence? Why did God wait two years to

give Joseph the dream? Why didn't He give the dream to Pharaoh after two weeks or maybe two months... why 2 years? Let me give you the answer I came up with.... I don't know. For reasons that are God's alone... Joseph had lessons to learn as he waited on the Lord in prison. I can imagine some of those lessons. Possibly he still had to learn total reliance on God. He was still clinging to his own pride and self reliance. Possibly he had to work with other prisoners and the guards in the prison.

We are commanded to wait on the Lord as he molds us into his servant. Allow me to share just a few of the passages from Scripture that teach this truth.

Psalm 33:20 **We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield**

Psalm 37:7 **Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.**

Psalm 40: 1 **I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.**

Psalm 130:5 **I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope**

Micah 7:7 **But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.**

James 5:7 **Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains**

Have you had prayers that you have been praying for a long time? Maybe even years.

Prayers for a change in our life's situation. Prayers for loved ones... their health.... their spiritual health. Prayers for colleagues at work. Prayers for understanding of a tragedy in our lives. I know I have prayers that I continue to pray that I have prayed for decades. Why does God make us wait? Let me give you the same answer I gave you before... I don't know. I can give an intellectual answer.... but some times I just don't know. But in my ignorance I rely on some facts.....

First and foremost, I am a loved child of God. That is a promise of scripture and I know God upholds his promise.

Second, God knows my need even more than I know my needs. God promises to give strength and to meet our needs. I trust in Him

Third, I know the process of becoming the child of God is a battle within me. My selfishness often resists the lessons of God and, in His patience, he teaches me again and again.

I guess in summary, this is the truth I have come to understand... I don't need to know everything to live in the love and care of God. I have questions. I often do not understand a

particular situation in my life..... But God is working with me and my ignorance is unimportant.

We all need to learn to wait upon the Lord. I want to share one final lesson

Lesson # 3 Note the ignorance of the advisors to Pharaoh. *Genesis 41:8 states this*

In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him

The commentaries on this verse almost all said the same thing. The advisors could not interpret the dream because of lack of understanding ... no what they lacked was courage. They were afraid of pharaoh. They closed their eyes to a pretty obvious truth because they did not want to face the truth.

I have now been a Christian for almost 40 years... since I was 17 years old. I am now amazed by the number of people who refuse to see the truth of God. To me, now, it's so obvious. Take for instance the idea of sin. Scripture says all people are sinful and need a Savior. For me, that truth is obvious. I am a sinner. I, very day of my life need forgiveness. I need a Savior. Ths whole "I'm O.K. you're O.K. just doesn't make sense to me. Look at yourself and be honest. We need help! But so many people continue down a path as if they are independent

and good.

I am amazed by people who think God takes a minimal belief and accepts it as all that is required. We are saved by grace... but grace is evident in our life by a changed life. Truthfully, this is a fairly recent deception in American culture. It didn't exist nearly so much in the 40's and 50's. I think there was more truth then. The long quote of Jesus I read earlier about ministering to those in need tells us the fallacy of this idea. But so many people believe it. I think I know why.... they want their "fruit" and God too. We saw this weeks ago when we began our study of Genesis and looked at the Garden of Eden. They want to "be like god" and also be accepted by God. Crazy. Impossible. But believed.

Scripture is indeed "Good News" but it is only Good news if it is accepted as truth. Let us walk, patiently, in the truth of God.

Well, that's it. God desires each and every one of us to be mature in our faith. Let us learn from Joseph. God is not finished with anyone here yet.... continue to grow in faith.

AMEN