

Genesis 40:1-23 Divine Timetable 10/7/18

Sometime after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. ² And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.

⁵ And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. ⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” ⁸ They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”

⁹ So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, “In my dream there was a vine before me, ¹⁰ and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹ Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.” ¹² Then Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. ¹³ In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.”

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, “I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, ¹⁷ and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.” ¹⁸ And Joseph answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. ¹⁹ In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.”

²⁰ On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in

Pharaoh's hand. ²² But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

(Pastor prays)

Joseph is someone many of us can relate to, as his life is a rollercoaster ride of mostly bad events. Every time something halfway good happens, something twice as bad follows. Whenever he rises, the fall that follows is twice what the rise was. We call it “one step forward, two steps back.”

Let's play catchup. In chapter 37, Joseph gets a special coat from his father. He has a divine dream that outlines his destiny, and just when we thought the future looked bright, his brothers sold him into slavery. In chapter 39, he rises to a place of prominence in Potiphar's house and, at the pinnacle of his new-found success, he is falsely accused for holding onto his moral standards and thrown into prison. Now in chapter 40, as he gets some traction in prison, he helps a fellow prisoner, and at the end of the chapter he is forgotten again and left to rot.

You've felt like this, I'm sure. Things go really well for a little bit, life looks promising and then—out of nowhere—the rug gets jerked out. And like Joseph, there you are, right back on the bottom. In the dark times, what do we learn about ourselves so that we might flourish in the better times? And on top of that, how do we make sure the time we spend on the bottom is not wasted on us longing to be on top? In short, how do we trust God's timing, learn how to serve, love the people and life that God has given us and learn to wait without hopelessness? This is a necessary truth...

God's People Must Learn to Trust God's Plan

Let's walk through the story and then come back and make a few points. There are several truths in these verses.

God's People Live on God's Timetable

God's timetable—not our own. Chapter 39 closes with Joseph in jail and notice the phrase in verse 1, “sometime after this.” You'll see that phrase again in verse 4. That's an indeterminably long period of time. It's the phone company saying, “I'll be out to your house between 9 AM and 3 PM.”

Now, we probably all would agree in theory: God's timing is perfect. No one here is going to say, “Nah, He's late.” Theologically, we grasp it, but emotionally it can be so draining. We wrestle with His timetable. The healing takes too long, marriage prospects seem abysmal. Our joys are too brief, and life is too short! Joseph's story is giving us a picture of God's view, that God really *is* in the details. All of this had to line up so that Joseph would be released at the exact right time to interpret Pharaoh's dream.

A pastor named Jon Blome outlined God's plan well:

Imprisonment of the cupbearer and baker – part of God's plan.

Joseph appointed to care for them – part of God's plan

The dreams the cupbearer and baker had – part of God's plan.

Joseph's concern for their worried hearts – part of God's plan.

Them trusting Joseph enough to tell him their dreams – part of God's plan.

In verse 12-13 and in verses 18-19, Joseph being able to discern the meaning of the dreams – part of God's plan.

Egypt's judicial process that exonerated the cupbearer and condemned the baker – part of God's plan.

Then in verse 23, the cupbearer failing to remember Joseph for two years – part of God's plan.

God gives us a closeup view of Joseph's life to show us how His timetable works and how active He is and how He never leaves us or forsakes us along the way. Throughout all of history, He works through time. Even the Gospel. Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 5:6, *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

God's people live on God's timetable.

God's People Can Love and Serve Even in Sadness

Notice the unfolding events in verses 2-4. . ² *And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.*

Joseph has been lied about, cheated, unjustly treated and is now serving prisoners! This is a clear demotion, but sometimes, in God's economy, a demotion happens to actually be the way forward.

Joseph is at his absolute lowest point, and at his absolute lowest point is when he has his greatest influence. You even hear it in his plea with the cupbearer, after he interprets the cupbearer's dream over in verses 14 – 15: *"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. ¹⁵ For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit."*

So it's not that Joseph doesn't want out, and it's not that he doesn't mind his situation. He knows it's bad, but he doesn't waste his life talking about how bad it is. Instead, look at how he lives in verses 4 – 7: *The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.*

⁵ *And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. ⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?"*

In the middle of his depression and hopelessness, Joseph noticed their trouble... even in the middle of his own. Listen, when you have been a victim, or unjustly treated or you are dealing with significant emotional pain or even damage, the temptation is to make that pain your own little personal and private idol, an idol that you go to and worship and give yourself to. The temptation is to focus on your own pain, on your own self.

In the text, God gave Joseph the grace to love others even when he was not being loved. Joseph's life points us to another. And specifically to the cross of Jesus. Do you remember Jesus dying on the cross and in agony and loving the thief beside Him? Or when he made provision for His mother or when He said of those who crucified Him, "Forgive them for they know not what they do"?

That's a divine love. That's a crucified love. It's Gospel love. Go to the cross with your idol of pain and leave it there and look to Jesus. He's the one who died in the place of all the sinners who will ever be saved, which can include you if you will turn from your sin and turn to Christ. Often, in God's plan, sadness and pain are ushers to bring you to Christ. I'd like to give you one more trait or characteristic about God's people.

God's People Wait Without Despair

Let's walk through the dream-interpreting scene in verse 8.

It's been at least 11 years since Joseph had his dream about ruling, and he has been through so much, enough to make anyone doubt God. It happens a lot to church people. They are active in church and something happens and they quit worshipping. They wouldn't say they are atheist but they are living like it.

But not Joseph. In spite of everything, his faith is intact and that is a gift. Joseph still trusts that God can work. In verse 9, the cupbearer tells his dream and ends up with a good interpretation. And in verse 14, Joseph just has one request, "Remember me." Well, in verse 21 the chief cupbearer is restored. Notice what the text says in verse 23: "Coming and going, the cupbearer did not remember Joseph." But he forgot. That is *active* and *passive* forgetting. This is a tough way to end the chapter and really to end the sermon. It's despair really. But that's where so many of God's people are. Let me offer just a few words of Gospel encouragement.

- Despair isn't the end, Christ is hope.
- Time for a believer is never wasted. God is always working and taking us somewhere.

The psalmist says in Psalm 119:71, *It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.*

Remember what the Lord told Paul in his agony: My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness. God has you where you are to bring you to the cross of Jesus. And from the cross is the perfect power of God to heal, forgive, sustain and bless.

People have forgotten, but God never forgets. Isaiah 49:15-16 says, *Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.*

There is healing in the words of Jesus.

(Pastor prays)