

Two Years in the Big House

11-4-12

When Joseph was 18 years old, he received in the form of a dream a prophecy that one day he would be a great ruler (Genesis 37:3-11). However, he soon found out that his path to this goal was not going to be direct; he was first sold into slavery (Genesis 37:27-28), and later ended up in prison (Genesis 39:19-23) for two years

As Christians, we are on paths to a great goal, that is, to reign with Christ. As well, we have lesser goals. We have aspirations and plans that are part of our Christian life. Our life is a pilgrimage (1 Peter 2:11), and as such we have a beginning and end. Sometimes the planned path is derailed; we need to be ready to handle such events.

Consider the many changes in the course of the life of Paul. He wanted to preach in Bithynia and Asia, but was instead sent to Europe (Acts 16:6-7). He had intended to meet with the Corinthians, but was derailed trying to find Titus (II Corinthians 1:15-17, 2:12-13). Later he intended to travel from Jerusalem to Rome, but we remember how that went (Acts 18:21, 21:12-13). Ultimately, Paul also spent two years in jail waiting for his plans to come into place (Acts 24:27).

The point is that both Joseph & Paul had plans with spiritual implications. Joseph meant to deliver his people, and Paul meant to preach to the King. Both of them had those plans “thwarted”; but they still achieved their goals. How? They waited on the Lord. (Psalm 27:13-14 Isaiah 40:28-31)

We need to learn that it glorifies God if things occur in HIS time. This ability to wait on the Lord is really part of two of the more difficult of virtues, patience and humility (James 1:2-4 and James 4:13-16). Consider that Paul made the point to the Corinthians that having to wait, to have his plans changed, made him the recipient of greater grace (II Corinthians 12:7-10). Paul had to learn to wait on the Lord; perhaps two years in prison taught him and Joseph that very truth.

Waiting on the Lord is hard. In fact, Scriptures point to many who could not do it. Abraham did not wait for God to provide a son, and conceived Ishmael. Saul did not wait for Samuel, and offered a vain sacrifice.

Perhaps at the heart of waiting on the Lord is the truth that there is no other way to be. Consider Peter in John 6:67-69 ; there Peter made the point that even if it was hard to wait on the Lord, there was no alternative for him. We have to be patient that the good things of promise will be received, and in patience be practitioners of virtue. Such is the great power of waiting on the Lord.