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THOUGHT
FOR
CHRISTIAN
LIVING

Today's Quick Word Genesis 41:1a

By Bruce Christian

GENESIS 41:1A - *When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: ...*

As we read through the events of this chapter we are left in no doubt that the dream experienced by Pharaoh was orchestrated in his dormant mind by none other than the Sovereign LORD, the Creator and Sustainer of ALL things, and the One who directs the whole course of human history.

The dream Pharaoh had was not only the means of saving the world from the devastating effects of a widespread famine, it was also what led to Joseph's being released from prison and playing his key role in the outworking of Salvation History.

This Salvation History began with the Promise given on behalf of disobedient Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden, when God said to the serpent, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15). It culminated in the Life, Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ more than four millennia later.

It is good for us to reflect on all of this when we are tempted to become impatient with God's timing in our own circumstances! During the 'two full years' that transpired before God, in his Divine Providence, sent this dream to Pharaoh, Joseph remained held unjustly in a dark, dank, cheerless Egyptian prison having been wrongly accused of a crime he did NOT commit and

depending on the goodwill of Pharaoh's cup-bearer, whom he'd assisted in prison, to put in a good word for him, but who'd forgotten to do so until Pharaoh's dream jogged his memory.

It is hard for us to remain patient and trusting with respect to our prayer life. Some of us have been waiting for much longer than 'two full years', but, nevertheless, our prayers must always follow Jesus' example and end with the proviso, "Not my will but yours be done" (Matthew 26:42). The promise included in Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.", includes the 'timing' of WHEN our 'paths are made straight! We need to remember that "a thousand years in [God's] sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4), as the Apostle Peter did when he spoke of our need to 'wait patiently for the Lord's Return': "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Perhaps while I am 'waiting' for God to answer my prayers, he is also 'waiting' for some important spiritual work to be done in me!

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Today's Quick Word Mark 12:41-44

By Bruce Christian

MARK 12:41-44 - *Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on."*

What makes Jesus' reference to this poor widow's giving even more poignant is that it was only a few days before that he had challenged the rich young ruler about his attitude to his material possessions. On that occasion, when he challenged the young man about keeping the Ten Commandments, he mentioned only those ones with which the good-living young man would be fairly confident of feeling he had a clean slate (Nos 5-9).

But instead of testing him on the other five (1-4 and 10: No other

gods, no idols, honouring the LORD's Name, honouring the LORD's Day, and not coveting) he asked him to do something that would indicate with greater accuracy where he really stood with regard to them: "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Mark 10:21).

The real test of what we look to for security and significance (our true 'god') is NOT how much we are prepared to give away, but how much we are desperate to hang onto. The poor, (old?) widow in today's account makes a good contrast with the rich, young man of a few days earlier. The poor widow was prepared to hand EVERYTHING over to the Lord, and thus demonstrate that HE was her ONLY security - her GOD. To what extent might we be guilty of breaking the ninth commandment when we sing to the Lord: "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold"?

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Today's Quick Word Job 9:1-2

By Bruce Christian

JOB 9:1-2 - *Then Job replied: "Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God?"*

In Job 8, Bildad the Shuhite has been 'waxing eloquent' expounding the implications of the common, but erroneous, view held by fallen mankind, that the wicked always suffer and the good always prosper. This is the basis of ALL man-made religions (including atheistic humanism!), expressing itself as 'karma', 'works-righteousness', etc. (Throughout my pastoral experience, non-church-going people who come to me because they want a 'religious' funeral for a loved one, invariably want me to know all the worthy aspects of the life of the deceased person, as if this would be the determining factor with regard to their destiny beyond the grave.)

But, in reply, Job posed a very significant question to his 'learned' 'friend'. In effect, he asked Bildad, "If your understanding is correct, what is the 'pass mark' for 'earning' a satisfactory, eternal relationship with a God who is absolutely PERFECT in every attribute?"

We have the big advantage of being able to deal with Job's conundrum from our side of the Cross! The 'pass mark' is

'keeping God's Law PERFECTLY' since God IS 'perfect', and the reason Jesus came among us was to show how this is done, and then to die a cruel death as a substitute for us, is because it is IMPOSSIBLE for sinful Man (all of us - including Job and Bildad) to ever GAIN a 'pass'. This is why we use the word 'mortal' (lit. 'dying') to refer to all of Mankind (cf Hebrews 9:27).

We are not told what Bildad's final 'fate' was, but we do know from the final chapter that Job came to the clear understanding that his ONLY hope was not in his 'performance', but in God's GRACE and MERCY, leading him to "repent in dust and ashes" (42:6). Grace is getting what we can never deserve/earn, and mercy is NOT getting what we DO deserve/earn. "ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." and "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 3:23-24; 6:23).

How important it is for each one of us to recognise the 'impossible' conundrum that Job put before Bildad ... and even more important, that we take hold of the ONLY answer to it that our gracious God so lovingly provides in Jesus!