

• *The gift of dreams revealing the future*

From his teenage years Joseph knew that he had a gift. He was able to receive and to interpret dreams. He knew that his 'gift of dreams' was to be used in the kingdom of God. He had known that his parents and his brothers would be junior to him in some way. His dreams when he was back in Canaan had let him know that he was to be an eminent person of some kind.

God gave Joseph time to adjust to his new life

God gave Joseph time to adjust to his new life. When God gives us a firm shove in the direction of a new life, we often find it painful. For a long time we dream of going back. Maybe we pray night and day that God will take us back to where we were. If Joseph believed in prayer – as he surely did – he must have prayed day and night that God would take him back to Canaan.

• *The years progress – seasons of Joseph's life*

Joseph was 17 years old when we first met him^{□1}. He was thirty years old when he became Pharaoh's senior administrator^{□2}. The total time when he was in Potiphar's house and Pharaoh's prison must have been about twelve years. Maybe – at a guess – he spent six years in Potiphar's house and six years in Pharaoh's dungeon.

□1 37:2
□2 41:46

The gift of God gets exercised

• *Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker*

The gift of God gets exercised. Joseph had been in prison for some years when two newcomers were added to the number of prisoners. Pharaoh's cupbearer and Pharaoh's baker both offended him and found themselves in prison^{□1}. Both of them had dreams and Joseph finds out^{□2}. Joseph has a gift of interpreting dreams. He instantly knows he will be able to interpret both dreams. 'Do not interpretations belong to God?' he asks^{□3}.

□1 40:1-4
□2 40:5-8a
□3 40:8b

• *Joseph's has an opportunity to use his gift again after many years*

Joseph has been in troubles and tribulations for some years but during those years his gift has not disappeared. He has never lost the gift of dreams which he had when he was seventeen years old. Now he gets an opportunity to use the gift that God gave him. It is not that he is going to be famous or highly appreciated. He is only an administrator in a dungeon. But it gives him the opportunity to know that the ability which God had given him has not been lost or withdrawn.

He has an assurance about his gift

• *A gift comes very naturally to its possessor*

He has an assurance about his gift. He is quite certain that he will be able to interpret these dreams. A man or a woman with a gift knows about it! A preacher knows he can preach. Singers know they can sing. People with gifts of healing often know that when they pray healings are likely to take place. The gifts of God 'manifest' themselves. Each supernatural ability is a 'manifestation' of the Holy Spirit^{□1}. We sometimes ask 'How can I know my gift?' It is not a question that should trouble us too much. A gift of God shows itself. The only difficulty is that the gifted person may think that everyone should be doing what he or she is doing. A preacher thinks everyone ought to be able to preach! A person with the gift of hospitality thinks that everyone should have his or her ability. A gift comes very naturally to its possessor. Joseph knows he will be able to interpret this dream. Soon he gives a happy interpretation of the cupbearer's dream^{□2}.

□1 1 Cor 12:7

□2 40:9-13

The manipulations of God are irresistible

The manipulations of God are irresistible. When God is working powerfully in our lives to train us, to chasten us, to put us where He wants us, His manipulations are quite irresistible. We may try to change or alter what God is doing but we shall find it quite impossible to stop the progress of events. When God puts us into a tight spot we shall discover

• *God will not allow Joseph to extricate himself from the powerful training that God is giving to him*

that all of our attempts to extricate ourselves will fail. Joseph knows the cupbearer will be released, so he takes the opportunity to try to get himself out of prison^{□1}. He tries to get someone to take notice of his troubles ('*Keep me in mind when it goes well with you...* '). He tries to get through to the highest authority ('*Do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh*'). He tries to get sympathy ('*I was kidnapped...* '). And he tries to assert his innocence ('*I have done nothing that they should have put me into this dungeon...* '). But none of this is going to succeed. God will not allow Joseph to extricate himself from the powerful training that God is giving to him. God's plans are moving forward irresistibly and exactly on time.

□1 40:14

• *The cupbearer restored but forgets Joseph*

The cupbearer soon has further evidence of Joseph's gift. For Joseph gives a sad interpretation of the baker's dream^{□1} and soon both interpretations are fulfilled. The cupbearer is restored and the baker is executed^{□2}. But none of his attempts to get attention succeed. God is moving irresistibly and Joseph's struggles to get himself released before God's time simply fail. The cupbearer forgot him^{□3}. Joseph remained in prison for another two years^{□4}.

□1 40:16-19

□2 40:20-22

□3 40:23

□4 41:1

• *Until God acts we shall remain in confinement under His mighty preparation*

'*Salvation is from the LORD*' (as Jonah put it^{□1}). When God is moulding our character and preparing for our future, He acts in a most amazing and powerful way. He can move people around with the greatest of ease but when we try to get ourselves out of the tough discipline that God has imposed upon us we find we simply cannot get the situation to change. It moves along steadily under the mighty control of God and there is nothing we can do to stop the progress of events. Our release from God's discipline has to come from Him. Until He acts we shall remain in confinement under His mighty preparation.

□1 Jonah 3:9

The gift gets noticed

• *Joseph did not need to persuade people about his gift – it spoke for itself.*

The gift gets noticed. A gift 'manifests' itself. We do not have to say a word about it. If what we think is a gift from God really is a gift it will get noticed. Pharaoh has a dream^{□1}; no one can interpret it^{□2}. But then the cupbearer remembers Joseph^{□3}. The ability of Joseph was perfectly obvious to the cupbearer. Joseph did not have to persuade the cupbearer that he had the gift of interpreting dreams. The ability simply showed itself in a way that was perfectly plain and obvious. This is what a gift is like. You do not have to persuade people about it. It will speak for itself.

□1 41:1-7

□2 41:8

□3 41:9-13

 <p>slices.org.uk</p>	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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