

#111 “God’s Sovereign Timetable”

by Brent Barnett

www.relevantbibleteaching.com

Waiting is a tough task, yet patience (i.e. longsuffering) is a desired fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). So, in other words, God’s purpose is to allow situations to come about in our lives which will require us to wait. As we walk by faith and by the Spirit, He will enable us to have patience and thereby glorify Him in our waiting. This, of course, is easier said than done. We don’t always get what we desire right away. God is not a fast food operator; He is honored when we persist in prayer and keep believing even when we have not yet received what we have asked. *Waiting, plain and simple, is part of the Christian life.*

Abraham had quite an ordeal of waiting that he endured, too. God promised him a child when he was 75 years old through whom all the nations of the world would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-4). Yet he was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5) when Sarah, his wife, finally conceived. Not only is this miraculous, given their ages, but Abraham waited 25 years for the promise of God to be fulfilled. That is a long time! Let’s remember this in our waiting and tarrying in prayer. Abraham was willing to wait and continue to believe God’s promises to him, and in so doing, God credited Abraham with righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Faith is what pleased God in Abraham’s time, and it is what pleases God in our time (Hebrews 11:6).

We will have to wait because God ordains waiting for us. Abraham waited, and we will need to wait also. What Abraham found out, and what we know from Scripture, is that God’s timetable is something only He has complete control over. He is sovereign, and therefore all times and events are in His hands. God’s timing is purposeful and right and good. He is not cruel and unjust to ask us to wait, for He remembers our faithfulness and will reward us for it. What He asks of us now is faithfulness and trust, and the rewards will come later (Colossians 3:23-24).

Genesis 15:16 is a fascinating verse, and it comes in the context of God reiterating His promise to Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan. It says, speaking of the Hebrew people, "But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." God made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would one day return from captivity and have this land to themselves. The pagan nations currently living there would be driven out, but this wouldn’t happen for a number of generations. Some time had to pass according to God’s sovereign timetable. God says that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet complete. In other words, God wasn’t yet ready to pour out His just wrath upon this pagan nation. They hadn’t committed all of the sins that God knew that they would commit and which would incur His wrath. He was being kind and patient, giving them fair opportunity to repent. A few hundred years later, they would be conquered at the hand of Israel, having not repented. So part of Israel’s waiting in Egypt had to do with the Amorites not yet being ready to be destroyed. Events in a foreign, seemingly unrelated nation impacted the events in their own lives. This is important because it reminds us that God is over all, that all people matter, and that *our*

waiting may not be due to some lack of faith on our own part but rather due to the sovereign purposes of God. Waiting is a God-ordained and God-designed part of the Christian experience which requires faith on our part and which is an opportunity to honor God and let Him shape and refine us.

Many factors, more than we can observe or count, go into the events in our lives and in the lives of those around us. God is sovereign over all of them, and always in all of them He will keep His promises. But sometimes we will have to wait as God gives us a chance to honor Him with patience, as our faith is tested, as we are pruned to grow and bear more fruit, and as certain other events must first happen. God is never late, so let us not rush God's plan and be early. The only perfect timing is to wait for the timing that is God's and His alone.