

The Forgotten Promise. Really? (II)

Մոռցուած Խոստովմը (Զ)

A Sermon Series on the Life of Joseph

40:14-23; 41:1-36

It is not easy to be in the pit. Joseph's life is literally in a pit. Let us look back. He was attacked by his brothers, he was thrown into a pit to die, he was sold as a slave, he was resold as a slave-servant to Potiphar, he was elevated in the house to be the chief of the servants, he was falsely accused of adultery, and was thrown into the prison-pit.

Joseph was not bitter. He was learning to trust God in all circumstances. Joseph was in the university of leadership. God was shaping Joseph to become a humble leader whose strength is Yahweh, the LORD.

I have not finished my sermon last Sunday. Here is summary and continuation:

- In Prison- God's *Hesed* (steadfast Love) (39:22-23)

-The Butler and Baker Imprisoned with Joseph (40:1-4)

-The Butler's and the Baker's Dreams (40:5-8)

-The Good and Bad News that Joseph Gave (40:9-13, 16-19)

Joseph was **honest and bold**. He gave good and bad news. He did not compromise whatever God gave him to reveal.

Let me tell you that God revealed to us His will and commandments in the Bible. He revealed them through the prophets and His messengers. But God gave His final revelation through His Son Jesus Christ. The disciples and the authors of the Bible wrote these revelations to us in a book we call **the Bible**. Although the Bible has one message, which is the **Good News of Jesus Christ**, yet it is a **double-edged sword**.

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12)

God is not in the business of pleasing us. God is in business of molding us, making us walk in the path of righteousness and justice.

We should not just hear things that make us “feel good.” There are sermons on TV that we hear that make you just “feel good.” There is nothing bad in feeling good, yet watch out, only in being with God, who encourages us and rebukes us, we can

learn to “feel good”. The Word of God rebukes our sins. The Word of God encourages us that we are not alone in our walk and that The Lord is with us. Joseph did not compromise the message. He gave the bad and the good news to the prisoners.

-Remember Me (40:14-15)

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 (prison NIV). ¹⁵For 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 (dungeon NIV).”(40:14-15)

For the first time ever we see that the narrator reveals Joseph’s inner thoughts. He reveals how Joseph **felt being in the pit, in the dungeon**. How he was carried off from his home and brought to Egypt by force. “*Show me some kindness*”. The word used here is **hesed**, which is the same word as used in describing how **God loves His creation**, His people. This is a **loyal love** to His people, even when they do not deserve it. God expresses that loyal love towards His creation (like *agape* in NT). Joseph is pleading to this man to show him kindness (*hesed*) and asking him not to forget him when he is released from the prison.

-The Fulfillment of the Dreams (40:20-22)

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. (40:20-22)

It happened exactly as Joseph had predicted it. One was exalted and the other was hanged.

-The Forgotten Promise (40:23)

²³Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

How could he forget Joseph?

We humans are not good in remembering our promises. Even when we mean well, we have the habit of forgetting things.

Do you know that keeping a promise is a virtue?

Is this the end? A forgotten promise? Not really....

- **TWO long years passed (41:1-36)**

Two years passed in jail. The right time arrived for the cupbearer to remember Joseph. It was when Pharaoh saw two consecutive dreams. Seven fat cows grazed on green grass. He then saw seven ugly cows which ate the fat cows. He woke up and slept again and saw another dream where there were seven healthy and good heads of grain swallowed by seven thin heads of grain.

No one could interpret the dream. **The cupbearer remembered Joseph.** The guards took Joseph, cleaned, shaved and washed him and brought him to Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked if he could interpret dreams. I love Joseph's reaction: **"I cannot, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."** (41:16)

Don't you love Joseph's humility? He gives the credit to God, not to his wisdom. Joseph did interpret the dream, and once more he gave the **bad and good news.** There would be seven years of good harvest, then seven years of drought. Two dreams meant that God was assuring that this was going to happen.

Then Joseph took the initiative. He almost commanded to Pharaoh that in order to have good plan he needed someone to be in charge of executing this plan. Remember **Joseph is a doer.** Once more we see God's sovereignty and human responsibility. We see God's hand in giving the dream to Pharaoh; we see God's hand on Joseph in helping him to do the right interpretation; and we see Joseph's Godly wisdom in taking action, and not taking revenge from a nation which enslaved him and put him in prison. In all these chapters, we will experience **persistent faith and severe mercy.**

Conclusion/Application:

1. The Forgotten promise is not forgotten by God

In chapter 41 we see that **after 2 years** the butler finally remembers that there was a man called Joseph in the prison.

Two years in the prison. Think about it. I remember my brother Sako had a car accident in Syria a long time ago. I was with him in the car. They took us to jail, (that was the law in Syria). Being a minor, I was soon released, but my brother, who was the driver, stayed in jail for a week. When my father visited him in the jail, my brother begged him to do anything to take him out of that place.

Two years in the jail with the hope that this man would one day remember him...

A forgotten promise, yet you know God did not forget Joseph. In fact, God has His own timing.

When Jesus was buried in the tomb, the disciples and the people thought this was the end. But God did not forget His promise. Jesus was raised from the dead.

God did not forget Joseph, absolutely. **God had plans.** He had plans to preserve the seeds of this family. He had made a covenant with His people, that one day the Messiah would come from this family. Those plans required that Joseph stayed in prison, even for two years, so one day he would be exalted in Pharaoh's palace(41:9-14).

God is the main actor of this story, do not forget. He has the master plan. We need to learn to trust Him. **We need to learn that God is greater than the circumstances we live in.**

Let me give you another example from prison life:

God allowed Peter, Paul and the other disciples to be in the prison, closing the prison doors, so one day new doors would be opened in their lives. Because of the prison experience, new doors opened in palaces and public places to speak boldly about Christ.

Even **Stephen's speech** in Acts 7 includes a message from Joseph's life:

⁹"Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace. (Acts 7:9,10 NIV)

Prison doors closed so that palace doors would be opened for Joseph.

The prophets of Israel faced similar situations where they did not understand everything but they trusted that God would reveal to them day-by-day.

**"Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing
without revealing his plan
to his servants the prophets."** (Amos 3:7)

2. Joseph learned to wait for the Lord

Joseph was in slavery for 13 years including the two years of prison. He learned to wait for the Lord.

Also he did not only sit down, relax and sleep all these years. **He was a doer.** Every place he went he was given charge of the situation. He became the chief executive in Potiphar's house. He became the chief of the prison. He was a doer.

I heard from a preacher this interesting line. "**The church is not a cruise-ship; the church is a battleship.**"

In the cruise ship, people come and relax and others serve them.

In the battleship, everyone has an assignment. No one in a battleship complains about the chairs, the room temperature, or the food...etc. They are in a battle. They have learned to listen and obey the **commander-in-chief**.

We need to learn from Joseph that things can be tough, yet waiting for the Lord is the answer. This does not mean that we do nothing; this means we ask God to give us guidance how to be His servants daily in our lives.

Joseph did his best while waiting. In Eccles. 9:10 we read the following:

¹⁰ **Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.**

Did you hear that: Do it with all your might.

Let me finish with these words from the bible:

"But those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

Amen