

## Faithful Service to God

### Genesis 40 (ESV)

November 20, 2022

Dr Ritch Boerckel

*1 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.*

*5 And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” 8 They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”*

*9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, “In my dream there was a vine before me, 10 and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. 11 Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup and placed the cup into Pharaoh’s hand.” 12 Then Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. 13 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. 14 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. 15 For 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.”*

*16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, “I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, 17 and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.” 18 And Joseph answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. 19 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.”*

*20 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. 23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.*

Kintsuigi is a 400 year old Japanese method of repairing damaged pottery. Kintsuigi uses gold to glue together the pieces so that the finished product is often more beautiful and more valuable than the original. I have a picture to show you. This method of repairing damaged pottery does not attempt to hide the brokenness of the past. It instead highlights the brokenness so that the shattered vessel's imperfections are actually accentuated and then reinterpreted.



This strategy for dealing with ruined ceramics intrigues me because it's so different from what I would do in the face of such damage. Being the dad of three boys, we had many, many, many broken pieces of ceramic throughout our years. So what would I do when something valuable would fall on its own with no help from anyone and break? What would I do? Well first, I would try to pick up the pieces. Then I would get some glue and we would try to glue the pieces back together in a way that no one would even be able to see the lines and to see where it was broken. That was the goal. Now, the goal was never accomplished, but that was the goal. It was to hide all of the broken cracks. If that didn't work, then my second strategy was just to toss it and go to Walmart and buy another.

Recently, Kintsuigi has become a popular secular metaphor that is used to teach people not to hide the broken pieces of their past, but instead, to create new meaning from them. The idea is that our imperfections are to be embraced, rather than to be hidden from. Rather than to paralyze us with shame or paralyze us with fear, the message is that the damage from our past hurts or past failures need not destroy us nor define us. We need not live in fear that someone is going to discover how broken we were in the past, whether as a result of our own sins or as a result of the sins of other people against us. Instead, we can take all those broken pieces and recreate a new understanding of our past so that we can lift up our heads and walk in hope.

Now, as with many worldly fixes to soul problems, there is much to commend this kind of counsel. First, it acknowledges that many, many people are living in fear that others will see the brokenness of their lives and turn away from them. Sometimes that brokenness flows from their own sinful failures. Sometimes that brokenness flows from sins that others committed. But it is true that acknowledging brokenness and not hiding brokenness is a liberating thing.

Secondly, I would agree that living in fear and shame is not healthy for anyone at any time. When we try to hide our past sins or wounds, we will find that the weight of our attempt to carry the brokenness of our past will ultimately crush us and we will become more enslaved by our pasts, rather than liberated. Finally, this worldly idea offers hope that the present good can flow from the bad of the past. That's true. It's true that some jarring tragedies become a fountain of our most joyful triumphs. Yet, the world's idea of Kintsuigi falls way short of the glory of the Gospel.

We know that Jesus alone is the power to redeem our past and to give us hope. Jesus offers us the possibility of being and becoming a whole new creation. The main problem with the world's counsel is that God is pushed completely out of the picture, or at least to the edges. God doesn't hold the center. So we're left to our own power to change our past into something good. We have to believe in ourselves more and more in order to be our own saviors. But that is a tragic empty lie. Like Humpty Dumpty, all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put us back together again. We don't have the ability to pour gold into the cracks of our own soul and remake ourselves into something new. We're not wise enough. We're not powerful enough. Trying to save ourselves leaves us in even a greater broken state.

As I look at this picture of Kintsuigi, I love the truth that our past brokenness need not cause us to despair. I look at that picture and I press it through the lens of the Gospel. The Gospel teaches us that we ought not to hide our past hurts or past sins. But instead, we ought to bring our hurts and to bring our sins to a High Priest who understands all of our weaknesses, yet He is without sin. He opens the door for us to receive grace and mercy to help us in our time of need. As I press this picture of Kintsuigi through the lens of the Gospel, it makes me think of God pouring grace upon grace through His Son Jesus, into our hearts. The gold of this grace then mends us together and makes us new in a way that this new thing that God creates is more wonderful than even before the brokenness. God is good and in His goodness, He offers this kind of miraculous wonderful deliverance.

The story of Joseph reminds us that God is good and He is gracious to His people. It reminds us of this hard truth that indeed God allows evil to rub up against us in this broken world. It can rub up against us in a way that cuts and that wounds and that digs and that scars. God allows that to happen. But in that cutting, in that brokenness of the world chafing against our soul, God is still on the throne and He is still demonstrating His love and He is still sovereign over the ultimate outcome. He is actually working through the details of this broken world to bring about a glorious purpose.

What a comfort there is knowing that if you are a child of God, it is God's sovereign working of grace that becomes a rock under our feet in the midst of the storm. It becomes this bright light shining in the midst of the darkness that is invading. The main idea we're going to trace as we look at Joseph's life is that God pours the gold of His grace into our lives so that we become beautiful earthen vessels, useful for His good purposes. God takes these earthen vessels that are broken and He mends them. Then He puts His treasure in us so that what He fashions in us becomes the means by which He brings glory to Himself as we serve Him, as we proclaim Him.

Joseph is a minister of God that is broken, but then mended and made whole. Then he is this glorious vessel that is used to shine forth the greatness and magnificence of God to others. In this there is meaning. What a joy to be able to wake up every morning and to know that we have something to do, something to pour our lives into. We have something to pour our energies into, our talents into that actually lasts the test of time. It actually is the most ultimate purposeful labor. So if you are a Christian, you are a minister of Jesus Christ. You are His workmanship and you're created in Christ Jesus for good works. Joseph didn't go to Seminary, but God took him through a school. So the first idea we're going to trace as we think about God's work of grace mending us and then God's work of grace in fashioning us into a vessel that is actually useful for His good purposes is the

### **Preparation for service to God**

Joseph was seventeen when his brothers sold him as a slave to the Ishmaelites. He came happy and hopeful to them with an eager heart to help and they received him in anger and bitterness and resentment and malice. They threw him into a pit, first considering how to kill him but then ultimately, selling him into slavery. Once in Egypt, a man by the name of Potiphar purchases Joseph and Joseph serves Potiphar faithfully.

All through this time, we're told in this story that the LORD is with Joseph. He never once leaves him. He is with Joseph and He prospers the work of his hands. Mr. Potiphar loves Joseph because he realizes that the LORD is with Joseph. He doesn't even know the LORD, but he sees that the God of Joseph is doing wonderful things in Joseph and through Joseph. So he elevates Joseph to second in command of his household. Then along comes Mrs. Potiphar. She sets her lustful eyes upon Joseph. He is handsome. He is competent and capable. Joseph refuses her advances to the point finally when he has to flee with his coat in her arms. Mrs. Potiphar then accuses Joseph of attempted rape.

Joseph is thrown into prison. There again, he is in a dark place. Yet even there, we're told in the story that God is with Joseph. He is with him in prison. The commander of the prison sees that the LORD is with Joseph and he places Joseph in command of the prison. We're not told how many years he served in Potiphar's house and how many years he was in prison prior to meeting these men, but we know he is twenty-eight years old. It is some eleven years after he had initially been sold as a slave to the Ishmaelites that he meets these two men, a cup bearer and a baker in Pharaoh's palace. This is where our story picks up.

I want you to think about the preparation that all of that had to do with fashioning Joseph into the person that he is and readying him for service. A key lesson all throughout this is how God is ever working to prepare us for something greater, something magnificent, something we couldn't even imagine. If you had told a seventeen year old Hebrew boy who is the eleventh of twelve sons, "One day you're going to be second in command over all of Egypt, the greatest empire on earth," I bet he would have said, what? His dreams had likely startled him already in that he would be master over his brothers and his parents, but that's what God is preparing him to do. God is preparing him to be someone who would actually bring deliverance, security, physical salvation to his family and ultimately to all the world because it is through this family that the Messiah is going to come. So God is preparing Joseph all this while.

I want you to think about this really young man who is a teenager and into his early twenties. Think about how easy it would have been for him to get absolutely stuck in his past. He could have just gotten rooted in his past and have his past just grind on him day after day, especially while he is in prison. He sat in prison without the hope of ever being released. Every night and every morning he woke up to that darkness and he could have just dwelt upon the injustices that he has had to endure. He could so easily have allowed the wrongs that imprisoned his body to imprison his soul. He could easily have been tempted to become paralyzed by bitterness over the wrongs that had been committed against him. Brothers sold him. Mrs. Potiphar lied about him. But instead, he opened his heart to God and God prepared him through his suffering to bring about a faith, a character, a relationship with the living Lord that allows him to serve God and serve Him in a spectacular way for the salvation of his family and ultimately of all mankind. It's pressed here.

**Genesis 39:21** But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

This is not a season where God's favor was removed. So his imprisonment was not an indication of God's displeasure. His imprisonment is actually a season in which God's favor is upon him even more strongly.

**Genesis 39:23** The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

It was so obvious that the LORD is with Joseph that even this pagan prison guard knows that this is what is happening in Joseph's life. So I ask you, if the LORD was with Joseph, why do you think the LORD designed for Joseph's life to be so very hard? Why did God have him go through such terrible injustice, such terrible abuse? This is the natural question we ask when we endure injustice, when we endure great hardship. "Lord, what are you doing? What is your plan? Why are you allowing this in my life? Where are you, Lord?" Of course, we have the advantage of reading ahead in chapters 43-50. But remember that for Joseph, this is not so. He didn't know the end from the beginning. He

is just experiencing this. This is what life is. From a human standpoint, there doesn't look like there is much hope that he will ever, ever be delivered from prison.

What did Joseph have that kept his hope in the midst of this darkness? The answer is he had God. He had the knowledge of God. He knew that God had made a promise to his great-grandfather, Abraham. He knew that God made a promise to him through his dreams. So by faith, Joseph knows that God had promised him a future. By faith, Joseph knows that the LORD is a covenant-keeping God. By faith, Joseph knows that God is good. He knows that God is all-wise and all-loving and He is all-mighty. By faith, Joseph knows that the Lord does not forget His own, not once, not ever. So Joseph trusted in the Lord in these prison years and he waited upon the Lord. He kept hope alive by recalling to mind the goodness of the Lord. That's what he meditated upon and I think that was the secret of his preparation for this. In these broken, dark moments, instead of going deeper into darkness with his heart and his mind, he lifts it up in faith and sees God. He sees the invisible. This is what believers do all through the text of sacred Scripture when they endure prison moments.

I think of other literal prison moments in Scripture. I think of Jeremiah, who faithfully proclaimed an unpopular message. He was thrown into a dungeon for many, many days. I think of Daniel, who was thrown into a pit with some hungry lions because of his devotion and love for the Lord. I think of the apostle John, who was cast upon the island of Patmos because of the testimony that he gave of Jesus. I think of Peter. I think of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail cell as the result of delivering a young girl from the bonds of Satan. There, Paul and Silas sing songs of praise to God. In each of these cases, we would do well to take notice that God is preparing them for something glorious. He is preparing them for ministry unto the Lord and for impact for the Lord. They are being shaped as instruments in God's hands to do His will. God uses prison experiences to show us His faithfulness and love. Prison need not destroy us. It can strengthen us in our walk with Christ and it can strengthen us in our worship of Him.

I want to give three applications here in this area as we think about what God is doing to prepare us. The first is, let us prepare ourselves for our prison experience. Almost everyone will have one. Satan will see to it that he attacks God's own and he wants to use these prison moments to draw us away from God and to throw us into a pit of despair and darkness and depression. It is true that suffering doesn't always bring about a good effect. That's why it's so really important for us to prepare our hearts because suffering can turn our hearts cold and dark. I've had many precious friends who have been crushed by adversity and they never recovered from it. They moved from faith to doubt, from light to darkness. I say that because the Bible urges us to prepare ourselves for this kind of thing. It urges us to prepare for the prison moment.

What's interesting about prison moments is that God doesn't send us a text and say, "Three months from now, you're going to have a prison moment." That's not what happens. Joseph woke up that day and he was on top of the world. "Potiphar trusts me with everything. I'm going about his work in his household. I'm enjoying all the fruits of my labor. Everything I do turns to gold." Then all of a sudden, Mrs. Potiphar confronts

him and that afternoon, he is thrown in prison. It was wholly unexpected. When we look at the prison moments throughout most of Scripture, they almost all come upon suddenly. So it's really important for us to prepare now for that future day.

It's not as though when we enter our prison moment we'll be able to say, "Give me a little bit more time to prepare for this." If we're not prepared at that moment, then whatever it is, we will experience. Sometimes prison moments can be sins committed against us by another that fall upon us. Sometimes prison moments are just the brokenness of this world. There is sickness, financial crisis, infertility, the death of a loved one. Let's ask ourselves a question when preparing our hearts to sing when we experience our prison moment. I love what Peter says.

**1 Peter 5:8-11** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

I love that! Peter has had his prison moments. He has been prepared for ministry as a result of these prison moments and he is telling his readers to be sober-minded. Be watchful. Be ready. Know that your adversary the devil is prowling to pounce upon you. Resist him when he does. Stand firm in your faith. Know that there are thousands and thousands of brothers and sisters who experience similar kinds of prison moments of darkness and they have emerged glorious because God is with them. He says I want you to know that after you have suffered a little while, here is how it's going to turn out. He says to prepare yourself for this. We serve the God of all grace and He has called you to His eternal glory. That is our end in Christ Jesus. I can guarantee you, Peter says, that there is going to be a time when He himself, that means He personally will restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you. That's the God that we worship. That's the God who is.

The second application is do not fix your hearts on the untrustworthiness of people, but on the trustworthiness of God. People will fail us. Good people will disappoint us. Bad people will wound us. But people will fail us. That's not to say there are no faithful friends, but we ought to make sure that our trust and our focus is in the Lord. When good or bad people wound us and become part of our brokenness in our life, we can easily get stuck thinking about them and dwelling upon them. What Joseph does is he turns the interpretation of his past. We know he does this with his brothers. He's going to tell us that later. But also, I believe he turns the interpretation of Mrs. Potiphar and he doesn't fix upon the injustice, the meanness, the hatefulness of these folks. Instead, he turns his eyes and his heart toward God. He says, "I'm going to trust you." Peter again would say

**1 Peter 1:6-8** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in

praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him.

This is what it means to walk by faith.

**1 Peter 1:8-9** ...Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Finally, the application I would encourage you to is to wait upon the LORD. Let's not judge our life by this present moment. If Joseph did that, there would only be darkness and despair. He knew that there was something ahead. When we are in a dark place in our life, we're tempted to think that the darkness is all we will ever know from that day forward, but that's not true. Know that God is a God who has a future day when faith will become sight. He has a future hope of glory. It's a glory that is not worthy to be compared with any of the suffering that we endure in this life. So let us wait upon the Lord.

I'm going to jump forward to Genesis 45 in a moment and we'll see what Joseph does here in these applications that I've just mentioned. In Genesis 45, his brothers come to him and now he is revealing himself to his brothers about who he is.

**Genesis 45:4** So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

So he is not denying the past. He is stating it.

**Genesis 45:5** And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here,

He doesn't want them living in the past of their failures either. He says don't get stuck there, just beating yourself up that you did this to me. He says

**Genesis 45:5** ...for God sent me before you to preserve life.

He says I know you sent me. I'm not denying that. But behind your actions, God sent me.

**Genesis 45:6-8** For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God.

Again he emphasizes that God is the one who sent me to Egypt. The suffering of the faithful is God's means of preparing us for His good in the formation of our soul, in making us into new creations. Suffering is also for His good in setting us into a mission,



into a purpose that has eternal glory and eternal honor attached to it. So there is preparation for service to God.

### **Revelation for service to God**

*1 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.*

*5 And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why are your faces downcast today?”*

He has been with them long enough to know what their normal morning face is and this morning face is really different.

*8 They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God?”*

These guys are pagans. They don’t know God, but Joseph nonetheless is teaching them about God. He has undoubtedly taught them before, but now he is teaching them that the God I serve has all dreams in His power and control.

*Please tell them to me.”*

He is offering to have ministry to them and with them. But he is offering to have ministry on the basis of the truth that God reveals Himself and God reveals His purposes and plans. God has a message. God is a God who speaks. He has a message for man to hear and for man to receive by faith.

Remember that Joseph lives at a time before the Holy Spirit wrote a Book, the Bible. So he didn’t have a Bible. In that day, God spoke to people in many different ways. One of those was through dreams. Joseph is a person who says God is a God who speaks. I want to make sure that I listen to what God says and that I believe what God says and that I act upon what God says. That is the foundation of Joseph’s life. Here’s the truth. Ministry for the LORD requires that we listen to God speak and believe what God says.

All true ministry begins and is rooted in God’s revelation to man. In other words, we have nothing to bring to people if we don’t have God’s message. We have nothing of power. We have nothing that instills life. We can be kind. We can be loving. We can be nice. People of the world are kind, loving and nice. What is unique about our ministry to

people around us, to our neighbors and our coworkers and our friends and our family? What's unique is we believe God speaks and that God wants us to be ambassadors of this message and to communicate the message of God to other folks after we have already believed it and acted upon it for ourselves. So here is Joseph. He has received God's message for himself already. He has believed it. He has acted upon it. Here are some men who need to hear God's message and so God uses Joseph to convey that message to the baker and to the cupbearer.

Do you wish to serve the Lord? If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, I believe your heart says yes, because every believer wants to serve the Lord. That's one of the things that happens. So where do I begin? There are literally countless ways you can serve the Lord, so where do I begin? It can be kind of confusing. It can be kind of paralyzing. I don't know where to begin. Here is where we begin. Take your Bible, open it and say, "God, I want to hear your message and I want to believe everything in it and I want to act upon everything you tell me." If you do that, guess what will happen soon? You will have a ministry to the Lord. So don't begin by taking a spiritual gift test. Don't begin by looking at all your options and crossing off the things you don't like and circling things you do. Begin by just simply saying, "God, you're the God who speaks. I need to hear what you have to say. I'm going to believe everything you say and I'm going to live by everything you say." Pretty soon you'll have an amazing ministry for the Lord. I love this part of the story!

*8 They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God?"*

What Joseph is doing is he wants everyone to know that he is not the source of truth. God is! He wants the cupbearer and the baker to know that he doesn't have some secret sauce to impart spiritual wealth to them. God alone is the one who has all the treasures of grace, of mercy, of hope and that we need to go to Him. Joseph is just simply a person who is pointing them to Him. He will do this later with Pharaoh. If you look at Genesis 41:14-16, Pharaoh calls Joseph in and says, "Here's what I've dreamed. I've heard that you can interpret dreams." If there is ever a time when a person could say, "Yes, I think I can interpret dreams. I've had a few dreams of my own. I interpreted the dreams of the other two guys rightly and it's important for me to make a good impression." But what does Joseph do? Instead of pointing to himself, he says

**Genesis 41:16** Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

I love that because ministry unto the Lord is God-glorifying. It's not self-exalting. He is confident in God. God is the one who speaks. When people seek after Him with a true heart, He will speak. God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer. Our ability to minister for God depends upon our access to God's revelation, our listening to God's revelation, our believing in God's revelation, and our obeying God's revelation. So here's the question. How do we listen to the Lord? Joseph listened through dreams. How do we listen to the Lord? If you were willing to stay until 1:00, I would give a great message on

this question. I have it written. It's all there and ready for you. But I don't think you're ready to stay until 1:00.

I have a great concern that is an overwhelming concern. There are a lot of concerns that a pastor would have both for his own soul and the souls of those who are in his church family. I have a great concern that Satan has moved the location of many people's listening to hear the voice of God from the place where He has established it, which is in Jesus Christ through the Word of God which the Spirit of God wrote. That is the place that God has for us to listen. Satan has moved it to something else. He has moved it to a mystical experience, to a dream, to a vision, to a word of prophecy that is detached from the place where God has set His message wonderfully, sufficiently, magnificently for us to focus upon His Son, to focus upon the Lord Jesus. He has moved it to a source that only appeals to the flesh's sense of power.

It's a power that is personal, detached from Jesus Christ. It places the location of our access to listen to the voice of God through some methods, through some technique, through some person who has some special way to hear the voice of God and they're even offering to teach me how to listen to the voice of God. We think those folks are super-spiritual and these folks who only have Jesus and the revelation that God has given through His Word that the Holy Spirit wrote to incorporate it in a living book, those folks are living at a lower plain. We think we can have a higher plain. I'm telling you that God has established for us in such a clear way a clear word. It's a word that is more sure than Joseph ever had. To discard that is to discard Jesus Christ. It's to dislodge ourselves from Jesus.

Test those spirits and see if Jesus is the Jesus of the Bible, not some Jesus that is manufactured in the heart and mind of a person that looks very much like the speaker. The Jesus of the Bible is very strange because He thinks differently, He talks differently, He acts differently than we would. He is a Jesus that is so clearly defined in the pages of Holy Scripture. When we move away from Jesus being the Word who is revealed to us through the written Word, through the Holy Spirit, we're moving away from the revelation of God and we're placed then in a place of incapacitated service. I wish we had more time to talk, but I just want to share a couple verses with you that you might meditate upon.

**Hebrews 1:1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,

This is the way it used to be. God spoke. He always speaks, but He spoke in many times and many places and many ways. He spoke in dreams and visions and direct conversations.

**Hebrews 1:2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,

He has spoken fully and completely. Then the writer presses into this because in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, these mystical practices were also alluring. They were also tempting for 1<sup>st</sup>

century Christians to move away from Christ and onto these mystical practices. He wants us to know that when we move away from the Son and move to revelations that angels give us, we're moving away from the one person who holds everything in every way. The writer says He has spoken to us by His Son.

**Hebrews 1:2-3** ...whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

He says don't leave Christ as your access to hearing God's voice. He goes on to say

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

It's the Word of God in which we have access to the Son of God. Peter is dealing with this very same thing of having access to God through mystical practices instead of through Jesus and the Word. In 2 Peter he says

**2 Peter 1:16** For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We didn't follow just every tale that happened to say it was spoken from God.

**2 Peter 1:16-18** ...but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

Do you catch that? He says we had this experience where we had access to see Jesus. It was prior to the New Testament being established. We saw Jesus. We heard this voice from heaven. It was great! He knows his audience doesn't have that access. Maybe they're thinking, "Man, if we had that access to God's message then we would be super-spiritual." So here is what Peter says after describing his past experience.

**2 Peter 1:19** And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed,

Do you catch that? He's saying we have a more sure word than even the revelation that God gave to Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.

**2 Peter 1:19** ...to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,

What is that word more fully confirmed? He says

**2 Peter 1:20** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture

He is pointing back to Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit in giving us a book that describes the message of God to man and provides the message of God to man. He says no prophecy of Scripture

**2 Peter 1:20-21** ...comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man,

It was not like the writers of sacred Scripture said, "I want to write a message from God. God, give me a message so I can write it." No, what happened he says is

**1 Peter 1:21** ...but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

In other words, this is a divinely inspired supernatural product brought about by a supernatural process. Today, many Christians are moving away from the revelation of Jesus through the Word, by His Spirit, and moving on to mystical forms of revelation like dreams and visions and new prophetic words. Many of these who are moving in that direction I have no doubt are children of God. They are brothers and sisters. But friends, this is not an advance toward God. This is a dangerous retreat from Jesus who is the fullness of God's revelation. In order to be a minister of the Gospel, we must be prepared. We must have revelation. Then there are assignments. I'll quickly give these last three points, here.

### **Assignments of service to God**

Do you suppose it was a coincidence that the baker and the cupbearer happened to be in prison at the same time as Joseph, the one who knows the LORD and the LORD is with him and he is able to reveal dreams, is in prison? Of course not! From a very human point, there are a lot of people getting into prison every day, I'm sure. There are a lot of new people. For Joseph and for the baker and the cupbearer, first it seems like just a normal day. We're meeting people. We have some bad things, but we're in this prison. But what is really happening behind the scenes? What is happening behind the scenes is that God is arranging assignments for His man, His person to connect with people who need to hear the message, and He is doing it in an amazing way. I say this because in your ministry, most of ministry happens through these heavenly appointments, these heavenly assignments. They first feel like just normal every day occurrences. From a human standpoint, we would look and say that nothing really happened there because we don't see that God is behind those connections. But He is! That's the way God works.

I love preaching the Word! It's a key important part of the ministry I have. I know every Sunday, this is what my assignment is going to be. But most of my ministry doesn't happen that way. Most of my ministry happens when I'm just simply walking through life. I'm at a restaurant. Yesterday I was at an airport. I was talking to the guy next to me. He and his wife and I entered into a conversation. I started to ask him about the Lord and found out he is an evangelist. So we started talking about the Lord. I don't know why

God had us sit next to an evangelist, but we prayed with them. After I prayed, another person came up and said, I heard you praying and we had another little conversation.

I don't know what God is doing. Sometimes He is doing spectacular things. Like with this, it's a message of salvation. It's a message of judgment. But I do know that every day what appears to be normal conversations, normal interactions are really not normal. They are supernatural. What I urge you to do as you minister unto the Lord, if you are a Christian, you're a minister for Christ. See every interaction as a potential that God is working and God is bringing you together and that there is something that is eternally meaningful that God intends to do through that. It will change your life as we begin to see life that way.

### **Boldness in service to God**

Let me ask you, if you were to deliver only one of these two messages, either the message that Joseph delivered to the cupbearer or the message that Joseph delivered to the baker, which would you choose to deliver? Have you thought about that? He had to tell this guy that his dream means that three days from now he is going to be released from prison. Right now, he is thinking he is stuck here for life. I get to tell him that three days from now he is going to be set free from prison. I'm sure that guy hugged him. Then Joseph even said, don't forget me. "Oh, I'll never forget you." Of course, he forgot about Joseph.

How many of us would say I want to go tell the baker the message? Joseph didn't have a choice, did he? He told words of grace and glory, and he told words of wrath and condemnation. If you are a faithful minister of Jesus, you too will have to deliver both of those messages. If you say, "I'll deliver the message to the cupbearer but not to the baker," then you really can't be a minister of the Lord. I know there is a sensitivity that we bring. We're not told too much in the text, but I imagine there is a sensitivity that Joseph brought. It seemed like he knew the guy. He noticed that his face was downcast. That's how it all started. He had sympathy toward him and asked, "Can you tell me what's wrong?" But then he had to tell him that in three days, your head is coming off. A faithful minister of God doesn't tell the message that people want to hear, always. In fact, at times, we have to tell messages that people hate.

You might say why would God have Joseph tell the baker? Why not just leave that quiet? We're not told this. I'm filling in the blanks. But every time in Scripture where a message of condemnation is given, we're also told that God is a God of mercy and that He hears a heart that repents. He listens and responds to hearts of repentance in mercy. I believe that this baker needed to hear a message that would draw him to the mercy of God. Do you remember the Ninevites? They were told that in forty days, Nineveh would be destroyed. There wasn't any, "But if you repent..." No, it was just forty days. Jonah didn't want to deliver that message because he was thinking, if they hear the message, they might repent. If they repent, God is merciful and He is going to forgive them and I don't want that. So I think there was an offer of mercy to this guy. We're not told the rest of the story, but that's always the purpose of bringing these hard truths.

So one application is pray that you can be bold, especially in these days where you will receive much condemnation, canceling, hatred for the message of God's righteousness. Then pray for pastors, won't you? Pray for Christian leaders. Pray that we will be willing to preach the message of the cupbearer and the sermon of the baker as well.

### **Reward in service to God**

The cupbearer didn't remember Joseph. He forgot him. So Joseph spent two more years in prison. But then chapter 41 unveils for us this amazing story of God's reward. It's an amazing story! What we want to end here on is that God's reward is so far greater than our wildest imagination. Joseph could not have imagined early on what God was going to do. He believed that there was a reward. But the reward for Joseph was to be used as the person who rescued his family and then rescued ultimately the family that would become a nation. He rescued ultimately the nation that would lead to the Messiah's birth, that would lead to the crucifixion, and that would lead to the resurrection, that would lead to the second coming, and that would lead to the eternal kingdom, the millennial kingdom. All of that is a part of Joseph's reward. He is right there right at sort of the fountainhead of all this. What a reward!

As you serve the Lord, remember that God's reward is sure. Now, often it's delayed. For Joseph it's delayed at least two years before he gets to ascend and get out of prison again. Reward is almost always delayed, but it's right for us to wait on the Lord with eager expectancy of His reward. That's part of the energy. That's part of the drive. That's part of the motivation that God keeps in front of us. So let us keep God's reward ever in view, especially in hard times when we don't see the joy of that reward, knowing that God's reward is sure.

I close with the picture of this Kintsuigi. I think about God's grace. What is your life like right now? Is it still in fragments? Or perhaps it's not in fragments because you've tried to take the world's philosophy and you've tried to mend it together and now you're reinterpreting your past and you're believing more about yourself and you're trying to manage your own brokenness. You feel like there is even some progress with that. What the Gospel says is there is only one way to be whole, one way to be made new, and that's through Jesus Christ. Thank God that everyone who comes and receives Him by faith is filled with the gold of God's grace and all those cracks become mended. This beautiful new soul is fashioned with a future and a hope. That is our Lord Jesus!