

April 22<sup>nd</sup>

## THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL IS EVEN FOR HEROES

*“Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.”*

**GENESIS 40:23**

**T**he dark night of the soul. It's a place that feels like a dry desert wasteland where you feel alone, neglected, and hopeless. Your spirit cries out for relief and asks deep questions of friends, family, and God. God seems distant in these moments. People feel distant. Prayer can feel like it bounces off the walls and comes crashing back down towards you. But God. God doesn't waste anything. In fact, the desert walk of discouragement, anxiety, and depression is exactly where our Good Shepherd has led us. It's important for us as men to see the whole scope of following our Master. We can't simply claim grand promises and always feel like we're going to walk on the clouds. Instead, God has much to teach us in the valley of deep suffering. And we aren't alone in this walk. God's men have walked the same path as you. Joseph is no different. Many celebrate the faith of Joseph...and many miss his test of faith in Genesis 40.

Remember an important tool for reading the Bible. Anytime a narrator gives you dialogue between people, he's emphasizing a key point in the story. It's no different here with Joseph. Many think that the darkest place is when he is betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery. I suggest that his darkest place lies in the dungeon in Egypt. Chapter 40 describes the dreams that the cupbearer and baker had, and Moses continues to emphasize that Joseph continues to give God credit for his actions. The baker and butler needed an interpreter for their dreams. Joseph doesn't hesitate...probably because he's already had experience with dreams from Genesis 37.

We don't see much in the Joseph story of Genesis 37-50 of Joseph's own thinking. But here in Genesis 40 we do. While you can't fault Joseph's words here, Moses gives a hint here that Joseph takes his own life in his hands. You may be even able to hear a sliver of discouragement or bitterness in Joseph's voice. What does Joseph say here? Genesis 40:14-15 state, "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. 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." He's not wrong. He was stolen and he was put in prison because he was falsely accused. With all that Moses chooses to include about Joseph's trust in God's providence (45:7-8, 50:20), here in chapter 40 we don't see any of Joseph's trust. Instead, he is reaching for someone else to remember him. Furthermore, Moses gives a sweeping statement of what happened, "Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." How dreary and dark this is. But wait, there's more. The very next verse starts out with a timestamp: "After two whole years...". Joseph sits in the prison for 2 more years!

Men, what does God teach us here? Joseph was in training. God was not finished with Joseph to prepare him to be second in Egypt. Remember the seventeen-year-old from Genesis 37? Rubbing it in his brothers' faces about his two dreams? It's here in the dark that God forms Joseph's soul. I've been there. Maybe you have too. And God does the same thing for us all, teaching us in our crushing defeats, disappointments, and depressions. God never wastes anything. God brings us to the place of suffering to teach us to depend on Him. To strip away our ego, our strength, and our distrust. It's here where God does some of His greatest work. You're never alone in the fight. Take a tour with the great men of the Bible that had dark nights: Job, Jonah, Elijah, Jesus. And God was their strength, and He is yours! What is God teaching you today?

***Spend some time thinking about times when God brought you through tough days.***

***What was God teaching you?***

**For Further Reading: Psalm 22, 42**