

STUDY NUMBER THREE - Genesis 40:1-23

INTRODUCTION:

(*Thundering Sneakers* by Prudence Mackintosh)

But our days were not all crowing and singing. I recorded in my notebook on December 30 (William would have been a month old) a day so horrible that I wonder how I kept my head out of the oven.

The water heater was broken--leaking on the floor--and the plumber brought the new one at eight-thirty before I was dressed. In all of the confusion I was still in my robe at ten when the installation was finished. Decided to bathe Willie before getting dressed. As soon as I put him in the tub, the phone rang. I yelled at Jack and Drew to answer it. Drew tried to reach the phone in the baby's room, but because he used the open drawers of the chest as a stepladder, he pulled the whole chest over on himself, dumping telephone and two pot plants into a drawer of clean diapers. Whoever called never called back.

When William was dressed, Drew comforted, and the diapers in the washing machine again, it was nearly noon. Still in my robe, I packed sack lunches for the two older boys and suggested that they have a picnic on the school grounds a block away. Once they were out of the house I dressed, fed William and took him for a little fresh air in the stroller. Drew spotted me as I turned the corner by the school. "Mom," he yelled in a desperate tone, "I spilled my thermos." "Cope," I yelled back, and quickly headed back to the house.

Moments later Drew, sobbing, banged in the back door. "Are you still crying about that thermos?" I asked. "No," he hiccuped. "The school building wasn't open and I wet my pants."

Without any guilt at all, I let Jack and Drew watch *Godzilla versus King Kong* while I washed my hair and lay down for a nap.

I woke up abruptly. William was crying, and Drew was screaming from the bathroom that he had diarrhea and couldn't get to the bathroom fast enough. Jack was dancing around the bathroom pointing at his stricken brother and taunting "Mama mia, Papa pee-a, Drew has got the diarrhea." I banished Jack to his room, cleaned up Drew as best I could, dropped the soiled underwear in the toilet to soak, then rescued my hungry infant. In the meantime, Drew makes it to the toilet unassisted, but before I could warn him, he, of course, flushed the underwear. Because this wasn't the first inappropriate item to be flushed at our house, the toilet overflowed.

5:30 p.m.: John wants to know what's for supper. Maybe if the plumber comes at nine o'clock tomorrow...

(*When the Hurt Won't Go Away* by Paul W. Powell)

Paul tells about some of the mind-boggling, teeth-rattling, gut-wrenching experiences he faced as a missionary (2 Cor. 11:24-28). He was whipped at least five times with thirty-nine lashes on each occasion. He was beaten with sticks three other times. He was stoned at Lystra and left for dead; he suffered shipwreck on three occasions and as a result of one of them he was in the open seas for a day and a night.

In his many journeys he faced constant danger from the water, robbers who operated without restraint, and opposition from his own countrymen as well as from the heathen. Whether Paul was in the city or in the wilderness, on the seas or on the land, it was all the same. There were times when he was hungry, thirsty, and cold, without adequate clothing.

And if that were not enough, he carried on his missionary work while suffering constant and excruciating pain. He tells about this pain when he says, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor. 12:7). The word *thorn* suggests the nature of his affliction. It was intensely painful. The word *flesh* locates it. This was not some person or a group of persons who troubled Paul. It was his flesh; it was a physical affliction. Guesses as to what this thorn was range from epilepsy to migraine headaches, and from malaria and the fever that accompanies it, to inflamed eyes (see Gal. 4:13-15). But nobody can be sure of what it was. We only know that it was an intensely painful physical affliction that he suffered.

Singer Ray Charles was blind by the time he was seven years of age, probably due to glaucoma. He said that when his blindness came he could easily have sunk into apathy and self-pity. What saved him was his mother's courage and intelligence. She simply would not let him do that. She insisted that he become self-sufficient. So she made him scrub the floors, sweep, and even chop wood so that he would not have to depend on other people the rest of his life.

She told him, "You are blind, not stupid. You have lost your eyes, not your mind." There are many people who when trouble comes focus more on what they've lost than on what they have left. They go through life counting their blessings on their fingertips and their burdens on their pocket calculators. The result is that when real trouble comes, instead of walking through the valley of the shadow of death, they wallow in it. They become victims of despair and they indulge in self-pity.

(cont.)

Justice Brandeis once advised his impatient daughter, "My dear, if you would only recognize that life is hard, things would be so much easier for you."

Birth and death are bookends that go on each side of life and give meaning to it.

The people who recognize and accept this are the ones who handle adversity best.

In our study of the life of Joseph, we have noted that God spoke to him in his youth in giving him dreams of future exaltation. Since the time of those dreams we have watched him travel through numerous painful experiences.

The hatred of his brothers brought about the selling of Joseph into Egypt for twenty pieces of silver. And under God's providential watch care he was sold as the servant into the household of Potiphar. And it was in the midst of these circumstances that he was unjustly condemned for an act he did not commit and put in prison. And that is how our last study ended. We noted that the Lord was with him in prison, and he had found favor in the sight of the warden.

We have noticed that Joseph has been triumphant in every circumstance, taking it as part of God's overall plan to eventually fulfill the promises which he has made to Joseph in his life.

The scene of our study today opens in prison. This is Episode #3 in the "Days of our Lives" or "As the World Turns."

Joseph has probably been in prison about a year. I can imagine celebrating his birthday was probably a pretty traumatic time. He is now 28 years old, and it has been 11 years altogether since he has seen any of his family.

Genesis 16:3, 4

And after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.

v. 1 Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt.

The writer points out the fact that we are continuing "some time later," that is, following the unjust condemnation of Joseph and the casting of him in prison. Now

God is providentially using circumstances which seem insignificant at the moment. How does the offense of a cupbearer and baker affect the life of Joseph? Many times it is the very small, insignificant things that happen around us that God is using as part of the all things to the full accomplishment in our lives of His will.

God is always coming to us in likely paths:

To Jacob it was at Bethel, and the Lord met him
there and he knew not that the Lord was in that place.

To Moses it was in a burning bush.

To Saul it was while he was fetching his father's
donkeys that he returns a crowned king.

Since Joseph has been in prison now for about a year, his expectation and anticipation level is probably at its highest. He is expecting any moment for some providential circumstances to happen, and all of this in anticipation of being freed from prison. After all, the Lord is with him in the prison.

How many times our expectations and anticipations are not the Lord's will for our lives.

I am sure if Joseph were alive today he could get involved in some of this positive thinking stuff that is going around and will himself right out of prison.

(The Seduction of Christianity by Dave Hunt & T. A. McMahon)

Nor is it only the liberals who are falling into this trap. Presbyterian pastor Ben Patterson of Irvine, California, has observed:

Of late, evangelicals have out-liberaled the liberals, with self-help books, positive-thinking preaching, and success gospels.

Anyone who imagines that because he thinks certain thoughts or speaks certain words God *must* respond in a certain way, has slipped into sorcery, and, if not playing God, is at the very least attempting to manipulate God. Charles Capps, one of the leaders in the Positive Confession movement, says, "This is not theory. It is

fact. It is spiritual law. It works every time it is applied correctly.... You set them [spiritual laws] in motion by the words of your mouth...everything you say--will come to pass."

Let it be known once and for all, God will not abdicate His lordship to the power of our minds, negative or positive. We are to seek only the mind of Christ, and His mind is not materialistic; it is not focused on success or wealth. Christ's mind is focused only on the glory of God and obedience to His Word. No other teaching so ignores the Cross and the corruption of the human mind. It bypasses the evil of our ruined Adam nature, and it takes the Christian's eye off Christ's gospel of eternal redemption and focuses it on earthly gain.

(cont.)

If we can make God or some cosmic Force do our bidding by the thoughts we think or words we speak, then we have achieved the sorcerer's goal: We have become masters of our own fate and can make anything happen that we want to happen simply by *believing* that it will happen. The power is in our *belief*, and God Himself must do what we *believe* He will do, because whatever we *believe* must come to pass!

It has been an astounding thing to watch how God has overruled in very difficult circumstances to bring about the ultimate fulfillment of his dreams to Joseph. First, the train of Ishmaelites coming at a point when the men were ready to recognize the opportunity of selling Joseph into Egypt and then to have him be in the house of Potiphar was in itself a marvelous, sovereign intervention. And now in prison to have contact with the chief butler or cupbearer and the baker of the king is just another way of preparing Joseph for his eventual exaltation into the place of leadership.

These two men evidently have a great deal of responsibility in the court of Pharaoh the king of Egypt.

The butler or cupbearer held a very close relationship to the king, and often spoke to him as he first tasted the wine to be sure that it was not poisoned and then gave it to the king to drink. Nehemiah was just such a cupbearer, who often found himself in the presence of royalty.

The baker had a big responsibility. At this particular time of Joseph's residence in Egypt there were 38 varieties of cake and 57 different types of bread, and the baker was really in charge of the whole dining room operation for the palace.

You will remember that Potiphar placed everything in the hands of Joseph with the exception of the food service responsibility. The Egyptians were very careful about who held this place of leadership.

We do not have the record of the crime of these two men but in some way they have offended the king by what they have done. Perhaps they had entered into an alliance to try poisoning the king through the food which he ate.

Perhaps the grape juice had too much water in it or a fly was found swimming in it, and as a result the king was offended. For the baker perhaps the cornbread didn't rise and the carrot cake fell, and for a southern king this was a national crisis.

Whatever the offense, the king of Egypt was offended by their actions.

v. 2 Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,

Evidently they had done something quite serious because the king became greatly angered with the two of them, and he felt they must both bear some of the responsibility for the action that took place.

v. 3 and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined.

Now we begin to see divine providence at work. They were placed in prison where Joseph was also in prison.

The real problem with seeing divine providence at work is to cope with the process in patience. For Joseph, I am sure, that he senses this is God at work, and he is already counting the days of his freedom, only to discover that it is not God's will yet for him to be released.

(Joseph: God's Man in Egypt by Leslie Flynn)

We need to remember that
 God's help is always sure,
 His methods seldom guessed;
 Delay will make our pleasure pure,
 Surprise will give it zest.
 His wisdom is sublime,
 His heart profoundly kind;
 God is never before His time,
 And never is behind.
 --Anonymous

(Has Life Given You a Lemon...Make Lemonade by Robert D. Foster)

Finally . . . wait for Him to bring it to pass. Here is the age-old conflict between our wrist watch and God's timetable. Like little boys wanting a red fire engine for Christmas, we just can't wait to possess our coveted toy. Christmas will never come. Dad isn't keeping his word. Mother doesn't seem to care. If we only knew! God is never before His time and never is behind. Commit . . . trust . . . wait!
 "God gives His very best to those who leave the choice with Him."

v. 4 The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time,

The captain of the bodyguard is Potiphar, and it is really amazing to see that his relationship to Joseph is such as it is. Evidently, there has been a restored relationship. The word of God is correct: He will make even your enemies to be at peace with you. He now trusts Joseph in prison with the responsibility of the cupbearer and the baker.

Evidently, Potiphar did not believe the story of his wife, and to keep her from embarrassment he does not allow Joseph to go free but does deal kindly with him in prison. You have to admire Joseph that he holds no bitter grudge but is just a faithful servant in these circumstances because it would have been awfully easy for him to have gotten very angry with Potiphar for dealing with him so unjustly.

We read that they were "in custody for some time."

Joseph used the time in prison as an opportunity to minister to the needs of others, and thus it helped to lighten his own load.

Joseph is seen as a willing worker, and Joseph had a deep conviction that God was controlling the disappointing and discouraging experiences in his life. The offenses of a butler and baker were planned with Joseph's welfare in view.

(*When the Hurt Won't Go Away* by Paul W. Powell)

"The world breaks everyone, but afterward many are strong in the broken places."

It is remarkable what people have been able to do while suffering in prison when their responses were right. John Bunyan in Bedford jail wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*; Luther imprisoned in Wartburg Castle translated the entire New Testament into the German language; Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* while locked in a Nazi prison; the Apostle John, exiled on the Isle of Patmos, wrote the book of Revelation; and the Apostle Paul, confined in a Roman prison and chained to a guard twenty-four hours a day, still proclaimed the Gospel. Since these men under such mighty handicaps could and did dare to make progress in history, why shouldn't we?

Joseph could see through this experience with Potiphar that God vindicates His own and lets us always leave our cause with him, and God will take care of the situation and the circumstances when we have been unjustly condemned.

We do not really know the profound significance of many of the simplest details of daily life; and happy is the eye of man open to see the hand of God in everyday events.

The secret to victory in traumatic circumstances is to see with the eye of man the hand of God in every event.

In this relationship with Potiphar there is no bitterness on Joseph's part, only SILENCE and SERVICE.

There is no tonic for sorrow like ministry to others. If our life is woven with the

dark shades of sorrow, we should not sit down and deplore in solitude our hapless lives but arise to seek out those who are more miserable than we are, bearing them a balm for their wounds and love for the heartbreaks. And if we are unable to give much practical help, we need not abandon ourselves to the gratification of lonely sorrow.

v. 5 each of the two men--the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison--had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

After being confined in prison for some time and being served by Joseph, and having developed a relationship with him on a daily basis, they both had a dream the same night. And each man with his own dream, and each dream with its own meaning.

By the fact that they both dreamed on the same night, it is something which troubled them and felt it was possibly divine intervention, and also prophetic in significance as to what was going to be their lot in the near future.

v. 6 When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected.

Joseph was making his usual rounds the next morning with food and supplies for the prisoners. And with a smile and warm greeting they were usually cheered by his constant and consistent attitude of enthusiasm. He would greet them with a bowl of hot water and towel, a disposal Gillette razor and some shave cream, some Speed Stick, and some Polo aftershave. Then he would bring their meal trays and a copy of the Pyramid Journal for them to read to be kept up to date on what was happening in the outside world.

On this morning, however, when he comes to them, he observes that both of them are dejected. They are looking down. They don't have any good words to say. They are in sorrow and upset over something that has happened through the night.

For both of them to dream the same night meant that there was some divine significance behind what they had dreamed. The dejection, the fear, the anxiety

probably has to do with the fact that a course of judgment has been reached by Pharaoh and they don't understand the dreams they have had. Should not some of this same holy respect and concern be among us in our land today.

(The Rebirth of America by the Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation)

Does the black shadow of judgment already loom over our land?

As America has permitted homosexuality to establish itself as an "alternate lifestyle," it has also reeled from the frightening spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Sin begets its own consequences, both on individuals and nations.

As it opened the doors to abortion, it found itself a party to wholesale murder and inherited a whole new set of social problems.

As it pulled the Judeo-Christian moral foundations from its schools, it invited an epidemic of drugs, rebellion and classroom assaults.

As it let its military respect slide, the Communists added new pieces of geography to its campaign of world conquest, and millions more around the world lost their freedoms.

It was Thomas Jefferson who said, "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just and that His justice cannot sleep forever."

(The Rebirth of America by the Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation)

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us, then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

April 30, 1863

President Abraham Lincoln's
Proclamation for a National
Day of Fasting, Humiliation
and Prayer

v. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

He could look at them and tell that there was something wrong. Their faces bore a look of sadness and anxiety, and so Joseph naturally, being sensitive to their needs, asked them the question, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

v. 8 "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them. "Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

The officials both recognized Joseph's deep concern and the fact that he had helped them on previous occasions by his joyful attitude to them and sweet servant spirit while they have been in prison. And so they immediately tell him the problem. "We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it."

It is now going to be interesting to see Joseph's response. Joseph had some dreams too, and there has been such a delay in fulfillment of his dreams and things have been so much the opposite from what he had actually dreamed, you could wonder if Joseph's attitude about his own dreams might not be seen in the advice which he would give them. "Yeah, I had some dreams about eleven years ago, and they were dreams of grandeur and great glory. I would just suggest you forget them. Think no more about them. The dreams which I have had only mock me in my memory." But instead of all of this,

Joseph says to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God."

We learn from this that even the experience of being sold into Egypt and being in Potiphar's house and now in prison has not affected his relationship to God. He is still confident that God is at work.

Delay is not Denial—

Disappointment is His appointment—

Romans 8:37-39

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am reminded of the story of the little boy who was talking to another little boy, and he said, "My dad and I know everything." Whereupon the other little boy asked a very hard question. And the little fellow who had been bragging said, "That is one for my father." Now Joseph in this situation is saying, "Do not interpretations belong to God. Tell it to me please."

How important it is for us to remember that in the midst of all of our traumatic trials and sufferings, we must not lose confidence in God. If the evil one can destroy our confidence in God, he has us whipped.

v. 9 So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me,

v. 10 and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes.

v. 11 Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand."

The cupbearer tells his story first, and he is describing the normal routine duties of a cupbearer in taking Pharaoh's cup, squeezing the grapes into that cup and providing liquid nourishment.

v. 12 "This is what it means," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days.

The first part of the interpretation given by the Lord through Joseph is that the

three branches represent three days.

v. 13 Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer.

Joseph, in the interpretation of the dream, tells the cupbearer that there is good news in his dream. He is going to be restored to his office of the cupbearer of the king even as he had been before his imprisonment.

You can just sense the excitement and anticipation on the part of the cupbearer. I am sure he is already beginning to count the 72 hours that remain before he will be released from prison and restored to his original position.

v. 14 But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison.

Here we see the first touch of humanity in Joseph. He's asking for a return kindness for the joy that he has brought to the cupbearer in his interpretation of the dream.

This is not unlike the Lord Jesus, who at the institution of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper shared with His men, "This do in remembrance of Me." Joseph is endeavoring to see God's hand of deliverance in these circumstances and so is prompted to remind the cupbearer to be sure and remember him when these things come to pass.

Joseph is going to need to learn that his deliverance from prison is not going to be by the memory of a cupbearer but by the intervention of God.

You can just sense Joseph's feelings in this situation. Surely this must be God's way of deliverance. The anticipation is exceedingly high, feeling that the same 72 hours that are involved with the cupbearer are also going to be true of Joseph, and he is soon to be set free from the Egyptian prison.

All of our expectations and anticipations must be brought and placed at the foot of the cross and live with present reality, knowing that the Father is going to work in our lives.

We must maintain a spirit of openness and never let circumstances affect our relationship with Him.

(*Genesis* by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

It was natural for Joseph to ask an unregenerate man to speak on his behalf to an unregenerate king. But God did not allow this request to be granted. Deliverance was not to come from the memory of a butler, but by the intervention of God. In your own life, you doubtless have discerned that things which you got by working "angles" brought no satisfaction. But things which came from God in such a manner that you could see the working of the invisible, filled you with holy awe and brought keen delight to the depths of your soul. The Lord set forth this truth in Isaiah when He said, "Cease ye from man whose nose can hold only one breath; what's he worth anyway?" (Isaiah 2:22). Let us wait for the eternal breath of God. Lord, breathe upon us.

(*Joseph* by F. B. Meyer)

This cry, "Remember me," reminds us of the prayer of the dying thief to our Lord, as he was entering into the thick darkness. But how different the reply! The promise was quickly made and swiftly kept. And as the sun was setting over the western hills, the believing penitent had entered the city which is never bathed in sunset glory, and had learnt what it is to be in Paradise with Christ. Far otherwise it was with Joseph.

Psalm 137:5, 6

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

v. 15 For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

Joseph vindicates himself before the cupbearer by sharing with him the fact that there is no reason for him to be where he is. In making reference to the experience with his brothers, he chooses to use the word which would convey our thought of "kidnapped" or "carried away secretly by force" from the land of the Hebrews.

He is very kind to Potiphar and to Potiphar's wife when he only makes reference to the fact that he is innocent of the charges which have been brought against him, just like the Lord Jesus was unjustly condemned--so Joseph verifies this in his witness to the cupbearer.

"I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

v. 16 When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread.

v. 17 In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

You can sense the expectant anticipation of an interpretation which is also going to be for the good of the baker, and he hastily tells the details of his dream so that he can hear from Joseph the meaning of it.

You can see on the surface that they looked a lot alike, and the baker is very hopeful.

v. 18 "This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days.

You can already sense the baker's anticipation in the parallel of the two dreams. It is a foregone conclusion that in another three days he is going to experience deliverance, even as the cupbearer had already been promised of deliverance.

One old farmer looked up into the sky and said to his friend, "See those clouds? I'm always tryin' to bring in the rain."

The baker's expectations and anticipations are not, sad to say, reality.

v. 19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat away your flesh."

What a courageous man we find in Joseph. He recognizes that he has a responsibility to every man to the good and to the bad. He is prophet of deliverance and prophet of death.

Just like Jesus hung on the cross between two thieves, one who responded and one who didn't, one who experienced death and the other deliverance, so Joseph is faithful in the presentation of God's interpretation of the dreams to these men.

Oh what an awesome responsibility as teachers of the Word of God not to be saying those things which men want to hear, but to be faithfully proclaiming the message of God independent of the desires of those who listen.

2 Tim. 2:15

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

Luke 17:34-36

"I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."

John 3:18,36

"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Oh how much they look alike, but how different their destinies.

Not even for his own advantage would Joseph swerve from the truth. There is something much more satisfying than the recognition by men, and that is the consciousness of doing the will of God; and the deepest joy of life is being an instrument for Him to use.

Joseph is facing an intense pressure at this time to need to say something acceptable to both of these men so he will be securing his own release from prison. He does not yield to this whim or fancy, but is going to be faithful to God.

Joseph's life is characterized by faithful loyalty to God under all circumstances.

Acts 20:27

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

v. 20 Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials:

It is on the third, the day of resurrection, that the great division among mankind will yet take place. For some it is DEATH, and for others it is DELIVERANCE.

1 John 5:11, 12

And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life.

2 Cor. 2:15, 16

For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?

It was on the occasion of the Pharaoh's birthday that he had a feast for all of his servants. And he calls for the chief cupbearer and the chief baker.

v. 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand,

Just like Joseph had interpreted the dream, so the cupbearer is restored to his office.

v. 22 but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.

What an impact this must have made to these two men to have realized that the dreams were interpreted perfectly by Joseph, and that three days following their dreams the fulfillment of these dreams was perfect in accordance with the divine interpretation that was presented to them by Joseph.

v. 23 The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

Our study today ends with Joseph now being alone in prison and the tragic statement: "The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; but forgot him."

Jacob was ready at the 14-year mark to leave Uncle Laban's house and go back home to the land, and he still had six years to go in God's program.

It has been 11 years now since Joseph left home, and he still has before him two more years of suffering in silence, serving in the prison.

Joseph is still going to need to have some time of discipline and preparation for the ultimate exaltation which the Lord has in store for him. And so Joseph could have easily been bitter toward the cupbearer and toward his straitened circumstances if he did not have his eyes upon the Lord who works out all of the events of our lives.

(*Genesis* by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

Every time the prison door opened the next day and the next, Joseph must have started with expectancy, and wondered if this was his release. But there is no wind so cold as man's ingratitude. Men are moved to action by pride, ambition, covetousness, envy, wrath, revenge, hope or fear, but the motions of gratitude are very faint; indeed, they are scarcely perceptible. Lord, teach us to trust only in Thee.

(*Joseph: From Pit to Pinnacle* by Charles R. Swindoll)

The reality is that he was forgotten. There are two things that should be highlighted about this particular abandonment:

A. Abandonment came not from an enemy, but from a friend.

B. Abandonment was not brief, but lengthy. In fact, it continued for two years.

Note: There is one additional category of mistreatment we can add to our earlier list: Unfair abandonment from a friend you once helped. This is perfectly illustrated in Joseph's relationship with the cupbearer.

(*When the Hurt Won't Go Away* by Paul W. Powell)

Andrew Murray, who lived and died a long time ago, sets out some principles that will help us in facing trials and difficulties in our lives with the right attitude. In times of trouble Andrew Murray suggests that God's trusting child may say:

First: He brought me here; It is by His will that I am in this strait place; in that will I rest.

Next: He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child.

Then: He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn and working in me the grace He means to bestow.

(*The Seduction of Christianity* by Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon)

And to whatever extent we seek our own will, seek to use God to bring about our will, pander to our self-centered desires, or in any way are afraid or unwilling to surrender wholly to God's will--to that extent we are exalting ourselves to the position of gods, whether we call it that or not. The teaching is spreading that we don't *ask* God, but *command* Him to give us all that is our *divine right* to possess and enjoy.

The biblical teaching of *supplication* has been replaced by the idea that we can get God to do whatever we want to by following the rules of the game. In reference to a house she wanted to buy, Gloria Copeland relates:

I began to see that I already had authority over that house and authority over the money I needed to purchase it. I said, "In the Name of Jesus, I take authority over the money I need. (I called out the specific amount.) I command you to come to me...in Jesus' Name. Ministering spirits, you go and cause it to come."

(Speaking of angels...when you become the voice of God in the earth by putting His Words in your mouth, you put your angels to work! They are highly trained and capable helpers; they know how to get the job done.)

(cont.)

Our selfish ambition blinds us to the fact that God is not a "genie in the bottle" who exists to do our bidding whenever we summon him, but is the Creator of all, who calls us to turn from our folly to submit to His will.

(*Necessary Losses* by Judith Viorst)

We are separate people constrained by the forbidden and the impossible, fashioning our highly imperfect connections. We live by losing and leaving and letting go. And sooner or later, with more or less pain, we all must come to know that loss is indeed "a lifelong human condition."

(*Building Life on the Promises* by Robert D. Foster)

When God tells you to "stand still" . . . He encircles and protects.

When God tells you to "be" . . . He will give you the power to become.

When God tells you to "go" . . . He opens a path through the sea.

Right now you don't know what to do. It looks dark and threatening. Let God take the initiative. If you will wait, God will work! Cease from your trying . . . start to trust and praise Him for what He is going to do.

Joseph was 13 years in a state of humiliation but each of these years served as a significant contribution to the ultimate place of leadership that is going to be given to Joseph.

Jesus must also bear some of the same reproach in realizing that soon we forget all the grace which He has showered upon us--in His own personal involvement in our dilemma by going all the way to Calvary's cross to give His life that we might have the freedom of the beautiful relationship that we have in Christ, and yet how soon do we forget.

Even a cup of cold water is not forgotten by our Father. A godly act of a servant's heart has to be free from obligation or appreciation.

Agape love does not demand a response.

We have a picture of the black ingratitude in the human heart. We have a cupbearer who could receive favors without acknowledging or returning them.

Men too often write the record of grudges in marble and favors in water.

The only thing that will bear Joseph up through these circumstances is that in the face of human ingratitude, there is always the all-seeing eye of God and the ultimate divine recognition.

Once again we see in verse 23 some of the "all things which work together for good," for if Joseph had been released now, then he would have been out of the country before Pharaoh's dreams could have taken place; and the hand of God is in Joseph's adversity, even though it is going to be prolonged for another two years.

We learn that God's way is the wisest; God's time is the best; and God's grace is sufficient.

In all the discipline of life it is of the utmost importance to see but one ordaining overruling will. If we view our imprisonments and misfortunes as the result of human selfishness, our lives will be filled with fret and unrest. It is hard to suffer wrong at the hands of man and to think that perhaps it might have never been. There is a true and more restful view to consider all things as being under the law and rule of God, so that though they may originate in and come to us through the spite and malice of our fellows; yet since before they reach us they have to pass through the environing atmosphere of the divine presence, they have been transformed into His own sweet will for us.

In all of Joseph's troubles his secret power was in his consciousness of the presence of God. This was the key to Joseph's life, especially while he was in prison. God is with the believer, whether the believer realizes it or not. But the realization of God's presence brings peace and joy. It is only when we realize that God will never leave us nor forsake us that we are content to let Him work out His will in our lives.

(Has Life Given You a Lemon...Make Lemonade by Robert D. Foster)

"I do my God my ways commit, and cheerful wait His will; Thy hand, which guides my doubtful feet, shall my desires fulfill."

In 1843 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church published their Psalms and Hymns for social, private and public worship. The above verse is taken from the second stanza of the 37th song.

Commit . . . roll it upon God. Leave to Him the right to call the strokes of your life. When you come to a fork in life's road . . . leave the choice to Him. Turning points in big and little decisions allow you to develop the habit of committing your steps to God.

It is not a cowardly way of shifting the problem onto another, nor is it a lazy way of begging life's decisions. God doesn't side-step man's common sense, judgment or brains. These are second. . . His will is first.

Our wishes and plans are to be subordinated to Him.

CONCLUSION:

There are a number of lessons that can come before us in this particular study:

LESSON #1: If you are now going through a time of difficulty or testing, there are three things you should remember:

1. God's way is the best way. He is using these circumstances to bring about the peaceable fruit of righteousness in your life.
2. God's time for deliverance is the best time. He is working out the impossible circumstances for your very best interest. And even though there are lonely years of waiting, God will be on schedule.
3. It is important to remember that His grace is always sufficient for us as we are going through the difficult circumstances.

LESSON #2: We are to put not confidence in man, for man at his best will only fail us. If Joseph had totally depended on him, he would have never been able to understand why he still had to spend two years in prison. Never put your confidence in man.

Psalms 118:8

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.

LESSON #3: We need to learn to wait on the Lord.

All of our plans may seem to be shattered and every door may seem to be closed, But you will be greatly blessed as you wait on the Lord. In your trials you may cry out to the Lord, wondering when the night of your difficulty will pass and the morning of blessing will appear. But God promises to bless those who wait upon the Lord. "He shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.

LESSON #4: We have learned that it is necessary to be faithful in the presentation of the message of death and deliverance. It is more important to give God's message

than it is to be approved by man.

LESSON #5: The cure for bitterness in our relationships with each other is to see God providentially using the human vehicle to the accomplishment of His purpose, and thus Joseph is triumphant in his relationship with Potiphar.

LESSON #6: Never let circumstances affect the divine relationship.

LESSON #7: God often uses the little insignificant happenings in our lives to the ultimate accomplishment of His purpose.

LESSON #8: The closer expectations and anticipations are to reality, the happier you are going to be.

In this particular study there are two camps: the camp of deliverance and the camp of death.

The camp of deliverance is represented in the cupbearer, whose dream spoke of deliverance.

The camp of death is seen in the baker who three days later met his demise.

My deep concern is:
Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?

Have you stepped out of death and into life?

Romans 5:12

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.

Jesus Christ has come to bring life and to bring life abundant to those who are willing to receive Him.

John 1:12

But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right (the authority) to become the sons of God.

May I challenge you to hasten to Calvary's cross, and there witness the price that has been paid for your sin, and receive Jesus Christ this very hour.