

POPULAR STORIES

CHAPTER 16

JOSEPH FORGOTTEN THEN REMEMBERED

Genesis 40: 23-41: 1-14

After Joseph declared good news to the butler, Joseph said,

Genesis 40: 14: But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:...23: Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Then after two years, after the word of God came to the butler,

Genesis 41: 9: Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:...

What was God doing for Joseph? In Psalm 105, we get the answer.

Psalm 105: 19: Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him.

Believers are absolutely dependent upon the Word of the Lord. We are born-again by the Word of God. We are given the promise of salvation by the Word of God. We are tried by the Word of God. And by the same Word, we are kept and taught.

Psalm 105: 19: Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him.

The trial of the Word is to teach God's child that we are totally dependent upon the Word of God. Christ is the Word. We are dependent upon Christ the Word speaking his Word effectually in our hearts. We are dependent upon Christ the Word speaking into our hearts by his word which we preach in the gospel and which we read in his written word. We are dependent upon Christ the Word speaking his word by which he moves all providence and works all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

IN THE BEGINNING

In the beginning, God gave Joseph his word through a dream. God gave his word that Joseph would be exalted and his brethren would bow before him. In eternity, God gave Christ his Word. God entered covenant with Christ to exalt him and give him all glory for redeeming his people. In like manner, God gives us his covenant word in our hearts in regeneration. God promises by his covenant word that Christ has, is and shall save us. But "Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him."

Joseph came into the field to his brethren and told them God's word but they despised him and rejected him. Joseph was tried by the word which he was waiting to come to pass. Yet, Joseph continued to preach the word of God. In Joseph, we see Christ who came unto his own—preaching the word of God—and his own received him not. Christ was tried by the very word that God promised to bring to pass. Did he cease preaching the word? No! Christ was faithful, trusting the word of his Father, saying, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me."

Brethren, we have God's word. We believe God. We preach his word. We know God will bring it pass. But until he does, it will be by this very word we preach that we will be rejected by sinners and tried. Will we pass the test? Will we cease preaching the word? No. By God's grace, we will continue preaching Christ and him crucified and wait on God to make the word effectual in the hearts of his people.

IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE

Throughout Joseph's life in Egypt in Potiphar's house, Joseph was faithful to the Word of God. But he was greatly tempted and falsely accused. It proved a great trial to Joseph. Did he believe God's word trusting God would exalt him in due time according to God's word or did Joseph open his mouth to defend himself? He was tried by the word, but he proved he believed God.

Throughout Christ's life, Christ was faithful. Yet, he was greatly tempted and at last falsely accused. Whose word did Christ rest in? He answered and said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Mt 4: 4) Therefore, when Christ was falsely accused he opened not his mouth. "Until the time his word came, the word of the LORD tried him."

Brethren, if we believe our Savior is sovereign then in the midst of the worst trial we can trust Christ to overrule even the errors of our brethren. Christ can teach them in the process and teach us in the process. And Christ can glorify himself and God his Father as he does so. Even our worst enemies are ruled by our all-powerful Redeemer so that he only allows them to vent wrath if it glorifies God. Knowing this, believer, we can keep our mouth shut and wait on God to work by his Word.

IN PRISON

At last Joseph was cast into prison with the butler and the baker. Then the word of the LORD sorely tried Joseph. After Joseph revealed good news to the butler, Joseph said, "But think on me [remember me] when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:... Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." (Gen 40: 23) For two full years Joseph was left alone in that dark dungeon. Did Joseph forget God's promise or continue waiting on the Lord? God kept Joseph by his word and caused him to say within himself, "Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." (Is 2: 22; Ps 62: 5)

As we behold Joseph forsaken in that dark dungeon, we see Christ hanging upon the cursed tree between two thieves. Christ was made sin for his people, made a curse for his people, made to bear the of God for his people. The punishment for the sins of his people, which Christ bore on the tree, was separation from God for his people. In strict justice, God forsook Christ on the cross. For three full hours: "Until his word came, the word of the LORD tried him."

Yet, while Christ was made a curse, he never ceased being faithful, trusting the word of the LORD. He believed the word of God. He said, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." (Is 50: 6-7)

Believer, we have God's everlasting covenant promise. Christ is our Righteousness. We are complete in him. Christ has, is and shall yet save us. "But until the time that his word comes: the word of the Lord tries us." (Ps 105: 19) But if we are truly Christ's, we can wait on God's word to come to pass, saying within ourselves with full assurance, "If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea

rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Ro 8:31-34)

THE BUTLER

Yet, how often we are like this butler. Joseph gave him good news. Think how the butler must have rejoiced! Remember how you rejoiced at the gospel when God first revealed Christ in you? Joseph said, “Remember me.” Christ says to us, “Remember me!” But when the butler was delivered from the trial, when it was well with him, “Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.” Sadly, we see us—believers—in the butler.

How will the butler be brought to remember Joseph? How is it we are brought to remember Christ and be kept in faith in him?

Here is the point of this message. The same Word of God that is the promise of our salvation is the same Word which tries us and is also the same Word that saves us and keeps us.

THE WORD AWAKES AND TROUBLES

First, it is the Word of the Lord that awakes and troubles us in spirit—Genesis 41: 1: And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed:...

At that time they did not have the written word of God. God spoke in different ways. Today, God speaks by his Son, in the gospel we preach, by the word of God. (Heb 1: 1; 2: 1-4) But at that time, this dream was the Lord speaking his word. In verse 25, we are told that the dream is God showing Pharaoh what God he is about to do. (Gen 41:25)

So in God’s time, by God’s word in this dream, God awoke Pharaoh—“So Pharaoh awoke.” (Gen 41: 4) As believer’s we so prone to slumber. But when we fall into spiritual slumber, it is the word of God—Christ the Word speaking into our hearts—that awakes sinners spiritually.

Often we are like Pharaoh. We try our best to ignore that which God is teaching us by his Word. We try to go on in our spiritual slumber. But God will not let his child fall away. By his Word, God will make us hear his Word, will wake us up again and will trouble us in our spirit—“And he slept and dreamed the second time:...And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled.” (Gen 41: 5, 7, 8)

Believer, be sure to get this. It is by the Word of the Lord alone that God awakens and troubles sinners in our spirit. It is by the Word of the Lord that our sovereign God turns the king’s heart withersoever he will. Trust the Word of the Lord. Wait on the Word of the Lord.

THE WORD DRAWS US TO CHRIST

As God works this work by the Word effectually in the heart of his child, God forces his child to seek Christ. But at first, we often seek someone else to teach us what only Christ can reveal—“And he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but *there was* none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.” (Gen 41: 8)

Magicians and wise men represent false preachers and men of the world in the scriptures. They certainly are unable to reveal the gospel in our hearts. But even God’s true preachers are unable to do so. Yet, when God is working this work, troubling our spirit, we often go to the preacher for help. God’s preachers are not high

priests. We do not pretend what the pope pretends. The best thing for a child of God is to go directly to Christ. Christ is the only Revealer of God's word. No man, apart from Christ revealing his word, can interpret God's word.

1 Corinthians 2: 8:...None of the princes of this world knew [Christ the Hidden Wisdom] for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9: But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10: But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

THE WORD BRINGS US TO REMEMBER

Next, we see that the Word of the Lord brings his child to remember—"Then..." (Gen 41: 9) It was then: when the Word of God comes, when the sinner is awakened, when the spirit is troubled, when no man can interpret the word, when God has given us a dire need.

Then we will begin to truly pray to God—"Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh,..." (Gen 41: 9) Pharaoh is a type of God the Father. When the word of God has brought us to see our need, then we will speak to God our Father.

Believer, this is certain. If we speak a word to God in truth, it is God who put his word on our lips. Listen to a child of God, king David, whom God has brought to pray,

Psalm 51: 14: Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. 15: O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. 16: For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. 17: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

And when God's word has searched our hearts and brought us to pray to God, the first thing his Word brings us to remember and confess is our sins—"Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:..." (Gen 41: 9)

When God makes his word effectual in our hearts, once again, we begin to remember our sin in light of God's great grace toward us—"Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker:" (Gen 41: 10)

When the Word of God was first made effectual in my heart, I remember beholding God's wrath which I deserved. God had justly put me in double bondage because of my sins—"in ward and in the captain of the guards' house." I was dead under the curse of the law and dead in my sins.

Then God, by his word, makes us remember what Christ has done for us—"And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret." (Gen 41: 12)

When I beheld, as it were, those "grapes pressed out", at first, I was fearful it was the wrath of God upon me. It was my blood being poured out under God's fierce anger. But Christ showed me, he took my place. Christ was crushed under divine justice in my room and stead and in place of all God's elect. By Christ's substitutionary death I was redeemed, set free, made righteous so that God's justice says I am not guilty!

Also, God's Word effectually makes us remember that God's grace is distinguishing grace—"And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged." (Gen 41: 13)

Believer, do you remember thinking that all your family and friends would delight in the gospel of Christ as much as you? But soon you found that they hated it. Soon you found that God's grace is distinguishing, particular grace. God quickened you but not your family and friends. So it was, in type, for the butler. He was saved but the baker was hanged.

God has mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardens. God owed you and me nothing. We were children of wrath even as others. But by God's particular, distinguishing grace, he revealed Christ in our hearts. Remember that?

THE WORD BRINGS US INTO COMMUNION

At last, when God has once again brought us to remember Christ and his great sacrifice for us, the Word of God brings us into sweet communion with Christ—"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved *himself*, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh." (Gen 41: 14)

Christ was tried by the word of God's promise throughout his earthly ministry. He was despised and rejected of men. God allowed wicked hands to crucify him. On the cross, Christ was forsaken of God like Joseph was left alone in that dark dungeon. Then Christ's body was laid in the tomb, a great stone was used to seal it and they even set a watch to guard it. "Until his word came, the word of the LORD tried him."

But Christ was proven the only faithful and true servant of God. Christ put away sin and brought in everlasting righteousness for God's elect. Christ declared God just and the Justifier of his people. "It was not possible that he should be holden of [death.]" (Acts 2:24).

So on the third day, like Pharaoh, God sent and called Christ by his word. By his word, Christ came out of the grave. By his word, Christ changed his raiment. By his word, Christ ascended in a glorified body. By his word, Christ the Word came in unto God.

Now brethren, Christ the Word reigns supreme over all heaven and earth working this work in the hearts of his people everywhere. Christ is the Word by whom we are born again—"the Word which liveth and abideth forever." Christ is the Word by whom we have the promise of eternal life—the everlasting Covenant of God is Christ our Covenant Word. "Until his word comes to pass" Christ is the Word by whom we are tried.

But bless God, Christ is the Word by whom we are kept. He awakes us. He troubles us in spirit. He makes it so no man can help us. He causes us to seek God confessing our sins. When Christ the Word has made us return to him, he is the Word who comes forth in our hearts as the Life and the Truth and Way. He makes us behold his raiment of righteousness and he changes our raiment. Then he enters into God's presence and causes us to enter into sweet communion with God once again. Then Christ the Word says to us once again, "Remember me when it shall be well with thee."

Oh, that we would never again forget him. Yet, we will. But until his word comes to pass—until the day he brings us into final glory—the word of the Lord will continue to try us. In each test, God teaches his child not to trust in ourselves or in any other sinner but to trust the Word of God alone! God's Word never fails!

Amen!