

Genesis 40: Discerning The Will of God

By
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As we move through the life of Joseph, we come to a fairly well-known story where Joseph interprets the dreams of the cup-bearer and the baker of Pharaoh. Since this story is well-known, and relatively short, I thought it would be easiest to simply read through the entire passage before we start looking into it:

“It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while. Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man’s dream in one night and each man’s dream with its own interpretation. And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad. So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in the custody of his lord’s house, saying, “Why do you look so sad today?” And they said to him, “We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.” So Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.” Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, “Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. “Then Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.” And Joseph said to him, “This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. “Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler. “But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. “For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.” When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, “I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head. “In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.” So Joseph answered and said, “This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. “Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.” Now it came to pass on the third

day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him."

-Genesis 40:1-23

As you can see, supernatural elements aside, this story is relatively straightforward. Joseph, being a man of integrity, has risen up to be the most trustworthy person in Egyptian prison when the Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker are sentenced to prison for the vague crime of "offending their lord". While there, they have two obscure dreams that Joseph interprets accurately, giving hope to the cup-bearer but prophesying doom for the baker. And then when the dreams come to pass, the cup-bearer forgets to mention Joseph to the Pharaoh, leaving him in prison, and the chapter ends.

However, like many obscure and short accounts within the Bible, this small chapter contains incredibly profound concepts and ideas that are frankly too much to dive into each and every one. The ones that I don't want to get into in this paper, but are nevertheless worthy of mention, would be the many allusions to the ministry of Christ that we see contained here. Joseph, like Christ, is cast into the pit through no fault of his own and while he is there confronts two other prisoners placed in the same position. This is alluded to in the gospels when Christ is placed on the cross between two thieves.

While there, one thief acknowledges Christ, and the other denies Him. As a result one goes with Him into His kingdom while the other is condemned. In a similar though reversed way, Joseph tells one prisoner that he will be released, and the other that he will be executed. But, just as the thief asks Jesus to remember him, Joseph asks the cup-bearer to remember him. But while Jesus remembers the thief and brings him into his kingdom, the thief forgets Joseph and leaves him in the pit. As I said, each of these allusions have deep profundity to them and are worthy of deeper exploration, but for the sake of time, I regretfully have to leave these points as they are, but hopefully I have sparked some curiosity in you to think more about these things. But for today, what I wanted to focus on is Joseph's specific ability to interpret dreams and its relevance for us today.

Meaning and the Unconscious

“Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man’s dream in one night and each man’s dream with its own interpretation. And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad. So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in the custody of his lord’s house, saying, “Why do you look so sad today?” And they said to him, “We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.” So Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.”

-Genesis 40:5-8

We have talked about this before but it bears repeating, while this story will sound strange and superstitious to modern sensibilities, the sequence of events described here would have been obvious and clear to everyone until the last couple centuries in the western world. Modern man has discovered mechanisms for how the world works, and so sees the world as a product of different observable, natural, mechanisms, while ancient man saw the world as being filled with “pneuma” or “mana” or “spirit”. This “spirited element” that filled nature unified the cosmic world and the physical world, or, to put it another way, the divine from the natural. This ancient mindset, that we now classify as “superstitious”, is hard to understand, but I believe that the psychologist Carl Jung did a fairly good job of explaining it:

“For instance, in a serious mood it would never occur to us to take the following events as a sequence: in the morning a bird flies into your room, an hour later you witness an accident in the street, in the afternoon a relative dies, in the evening your cook drops the soup tureen, and, on coming home late at night, you find that you have lost your key. Primitive man would not have overlooked a single item in this chain of events, for every new link would have answered to his expectations. And he is right—he is much more nearly right than we are willing to admit. His anxious expectations are justified and serve a purpose. Such a day, he holds, is ill-omened, and on it nothing should be undertaken. In our world this would be reprehensible superstition, but in the world of primitive man it is highly appropriate shrewdness. In that world man is far more exposed to accidents than we in our protected and well-regulated existence. When you are in the wilderness you dare not take too many chances. The European soon comes to appreciate this.”

-Carl Jung - “Modern Man in search of a Soul”

To put this point more simply, in a world in which there is no separation between the cosmic and the material, every event in the course of a day is imbued with meaning and significance. But for modern man, most of our lives are devoid of significance, we tend to believe that things “just happen”. So while we may see ourselves as more enlightened today because we don’t ascribe dark omens to a bird flying into our room,

or a cook accidentally dropping soup on the ground, or even having a bad dream, what we have gained in our outlook may have come at an unknown, yet massive, cost.

For the ancient person who ascribed divine significance to each and every event within their life, they took for granted the reality that their lives were not their own, that their existence was a part of a divine plan and that everything that they did was predetermined by fate or the will of the gods. While this perspective might sound stifling and repressive to our modern minds, in a world that was filled with intrinsic meaning, finding a sense of personal meaning or purpose in everything you did was an unconscious act. Whereas, for modern man, now that we have purged ourselves of ancient superstitions, we should not wonder at the fact that many of us now struggle with overwhelming feelings of vanity, meaninglessness, and anxiety.

This is not to say that the ancient perspective is correct (much of the Old Testament is written to show that while God creates nature, He is not *in* nature) but only to acknowledge the source of a major underlying problem within our society. Even in the church, where we openly believe in the providence of God, we are far more influenced by the perspective of our culture than we care to admit. As such, even though we *know* that our lives have meaning and that we are living within the will of God, we still struggle with the same feelings of meaninglessness and anxiety as the world around us. Deep down we tend to think that the will of God only exists in certain places and decisions, and so we are desperate to find the will of God for our lives and we are terrified that we will make wrong decisions that put us outside the will of God.

The ancient person didn't struggle with this, they *knew* that everything that they did was well within the purposes of their gods and so they didn't struggle as pervasively as we do with these feelings of emptiness and anxiety. Another important point to make is that this divine meaning was also related to their identity. This is why ancient people put so much emphasis on things like astronomy, not only to figure out the movement of the celestial bodies in relation to fate, but also in relation to the individual's identity. And even in dreams, it isn't that they believed that every dream had prophetic significance *per se*, but that the dreams were a type of revelation of divine purposes. This means that the significance could either be prophetic of external events, or of internal meaning or significance. Take this passage from C.S. Lewis when he spoke about the ancient view of dreams and discusses five different types of dreams:

"His scheme is derived from the Oneirocritica of Artemidorus (first century A.D.). According to it there are five species of dreams, three veridical, and two which have 'no divination' (nihil divinationis) in them. The veridical kinds are as follows: (1) Somnium (ὄνειρος). This shows us truths veiled in an allegorical form. Pharaoh's dream of the fat

and lean kine would be a specimen. Every allegorical dream-poem in the Middle Ages records a feigned somnium. Nearly all dreams are assumed to be somnia by modern psychologists, and the somnium is the 'dreem' in Chaucer's Hous of Fame, I, 9. (2) Visio (ὄραμα). This is a direct, literal pre-vision of the future. Mr Dunne's Experiment with Time is mainly about visiones. This type appears as 'avisoun' in Chaucer (op. cit. I, 7). (3) Oraculum (χρηματισμός). In this one of the dreamer's parents or 'some other grave and venerable person' appears and openly declares the future or gives advice. Such dreams are Chaucer's 'oracles' (op. cit. I, II). The useless kinds are: (1) Insomnium (ἐνύπνιον). This merely repeats working preoccupations—'the carter dremeth how his cartes goon' as Chaucer says (Parlement, 102). (2) Visum (φάντασμα). This occurs when, not yet fully asleep and believing ourselves to be still awake, we see shapes rushing towards us or flitting hither and thither. Epialtes or nightmare is included in this class."

-C.S. Lewis - "The Discarded Image"

A lot of what he said might be rather complex, (the above quote is taken from one of his lectures at Oxford), but the point is actually quite simple, and one that we have already made. For the ancient person, there was no such thing as happenstance, everything was according to purpose, even something as small as the content of dreams. For the modern person, so much of our lives seems to contain no greater meaning and yet we are shocked that we struggle with feelings of meaninglessness. This might not sound odd, but think about it. If every day I encounter things in nature and my own unconscious through things like dreams and fantasies, and I ascribe no higher significance to any of these events, feelings of meaninglessness can naturally creep into my heart from time to time.

In the modern world, we all feel this so acutely that many are longing to go back to this more ancient way of thinking. This is the reason why so many are becoming obsessed with personality tests and horoscopes. Even most of our modern obsession with psychology and the unconscious is an expression of this same need, for, after all, it is the modern psychologist who studies and gives interpretation to dreams. Take this other quote from Carl Jung on this subject:

"Since the earliest times, attempts have repeatedly been made to classify individuals according to types and thus to bring order into what was confusion. The oldest attempt of this sort known to us was made by oriental astrologers who devised the so-called trigons of the four elements, air, water, earth and fire. The trigon of the air as it appears in a horoscope consists of the three "aerial" signs of the zodiac, Aquarius, Gemini and Libra; the trigon of fire is made up of Aries, Leo and Sagittarius. According to this age-old view, whoever is born in these trigons shares in their aerial or fiery nature and

reveals a corresponding disposition and destiny... This historical retrospect may set our minds at rest as to the fact that our modern efforts to formulate a theory of types are by no means new and unprecedented, even if our scientific conscience no longer permits us to revert to these old, intuitive ways of handling the question. We must find our own answer to this problem—an answer which satisfies the demands of science.”

-Carl Jung - “Modern Man in Search of a Soul”

What Carl Jung admits here, is the very thing that modern psychologists refuse to admit. That the modern exploration of identity through the means of psychological types, or temperaments, which includes mental diagnosis and mapping neurological chemicals, is nothing more than the modern version of the same ancient impulse we see in the book of Genesis, the impulse to find higher meanings in our temporal phenomenon. It is the strangest imaginable thing that the modern materialistic world has become so interested in the “psyche” which was the ancient Greek word for “soul”.

The truth is that we long for the kind of definition and cosmic significance that the ancient person had and so we seek it in the same places that ancient people did. The problem for us, is that we live in a time when these things have been shown to be hollow. We know that the movement of the stars is not the movement of celestial beings and we know that not all of our dreams have any great meaning behind them. So how does the modern Christian navigate this modern world without being tempted towards these more ancient superstitious beliefs, or without sinking into a malaise of meaninglessness?

The Complex Will of God

“So Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.”

-Genesis 40:8

The fascinating thing about how Joseph approaches this situation is that he doesn't dismiss their underlying belief that their dreams carried cosmic significance, but instead, he points out that God is the only One who knows the meaning of these things. The tragic thing that is happening in the modern church, is that more and more the church has stepped out of answering these kinds of primal longings for identity and meaning. Instead we speak of the sovereignty of God or our identity in God, but functionally, our behavior is almost identical to materialists.

We treat the majority of our life circumstances as if they have no higher meaning and we treat all individual identities and pursuits of meaning as themselves arbitrary as long

as people perform the vague task of putting God first. With attitudes like this, it shouldn't surprise us that Christians are also going to modern psychologists, horoscopes, personality tests, and the like for the kind of meaning and identity that they don't feel is accessible in the church.

Other Christians are going to either more traditional churches that allow them to engage in higher meaning through ancient rituals, or they are moving towards the more charismatic branches of Christianity that do approach the normal phenomena of everyday life in much the same way that the ancients did. My goal in saying this is not to condemn these more traditional or charismatic branches of Christianity, I have my concerns with some of their ideals and excesses, but Christ warns us in Matthew 7:

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? “Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

-Matthew 7:3-5

I am a part of a very particular tradition of Christianity and that is the tradition that I am most concerned with. My point in bringing this up is to show how Christians *have* been responding to this problem, and how our local church might learn from these approaches and come up with a different solution that meets the present moment for people within our tradition.

When I look at Joseph's answer, he isn't saying that the ancient peoples were wrong for ascribing meaning to their dreams, just that they were wrong in trusting the dream interpreters of their culture. We will talk more about these "interpreters" in the next chapter, but for now, just consider what Joseph is saying to these two men. He is affirming their belief that their dreams contain meaning, but he is simultaneously pointing them to the ultimate meaning that is in Christ.

While Joseph doesn't mention this problem here, but this principle is mentioned throughout Scriptures, is that if meaning is bound up in God, that meaning is not easily accessible.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”

-Isaiah 55:8-9

For the ancient person, who believed that their gods were *in* nature, they were convinced that meaning was simple and easy to access. They had developed a system of interpretation that relied on the movement of the stars and things like that. Because of this, they had this arrogant idea that interpretation was simple and could be performed by anyone who understood the correct system. As such, even though they had defined human identity, their definitions were relatively simple and rooted in a person's various roles and responsibilities.

What Isaiah is declaring in the above passage would have been fairly revolutionary for the ancient person. Our God is not bound by nature, He *transcends* nature. Therefore, these questions of meaning and identity are not so easily answered, nor are they easily understood. The frustrating thing for us is that many of the meanings around us are beyond our comprehension. The Christian life is not about attaining knowledge, though we should hopefully be gaining knowledge and discernment, but instead about gaining humility:

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

-Proverbs 1:7

I believe that the biggest problem we should have with these ancient and modern systems of identity and meaning is not necessarily that they are wrong, for they do contain levels of profound wisdom, but that they promote an arrogant view of the world. They teach people that their destiny and identity can be *easily* understood within their system and that by understanding, they can live above the various problems and anxieties of their life. To contrast this, when Solomon wrote his book about Godly wisdom, he declared that the ultimate aim of gaining Godly wisdom is not to understand all mysteries and be in total control of our destiny, but instead to gain an appropriate “fear” of the Lord.

Even in Joseph’s answer, we detect not even the faintest trace of arrogance. He doesn’t declare himself to be a wise sage with all the answers, but humbly acknowledges his dependence on God, and by doing so, he glorifies God through his abilities:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

-Matthew 5:16

While Joseph is clearly a man of profound wisdom, he doesn't dare believe that his earthly wisdom gives him access to God's eternal purposes. Even in all his wisdom, he understands the limitations of what he can do. With his understanding, he may have given a temporal understanding to these men about the significance of their dreams, but it is only through God *granting* to Joseph His divine purposes for these men that he could give them the full meaning of their dreams.

"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

-1 Corinthians 4:7

And this is an important point. The supernatural gifts that we see in the Bible are supernatural extensions of natural gifts. So for instance, when the apostle used the supernatural gift of healing, this gift was an extension of the natural gift of healing that a doctor has access to. In the same way, the supernatural strength of Samson, was an extension of the natural might of a man like David. The gift of prophecy works the same way. The supernatural insight that Joseph had access to as a prophet is an extension of the type of insight that a person with great wisdom has naturally.

But gifts, both natural and supernatural, contain the temptation to trust in the gift itself and not the giver of the gift. To use a quick example. Samson is given supernatural strength by God, but he becomes so dependent on this gift of strength, that he comes to ignore God completely until he recklessly gives the secret of his strength away. However, even though David had worked hard to accumulate his strength and skill as a warrior, notice how he speaks of his gifts:

"But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, "I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. "Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

-1 Samuel 17:34-37

While David had clearly trained himself vigorously to be able to competently fight both a bear and a lion, he attributes his deliverance to God. Does this mean that God supernaturally empowered him to defeat these opponents? No. But David attributes

even his natural skill and strength to the God who created him. This type of humility is absolutely necessary when we approach issues like meaning, destiny, and identity.

Since we live in a world that is filled with intrinsic meaning, it would be foolish to treat the events of our lives, and even the experiences with our unconscious, as though they have no meaning and ignore them. But it would be equally foolish to assume that this meaning is easily discernible to us. This is why I always cringe a little when someone says that they heard from God. This isn't because I doubt that they "heard" something, nor that there is deep significance in what they "heard". But I cringe at the lack of humility that would lead someone to believe that they know the precise meaning of what they heard.

"There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."

-Proverbs 14:12

The failure to show proper humility will lead us to destruction. When we insist that we emphatically know the will of God for our life or for someone else's we are making a grave error. It's not that I don't believe that God won't give someone the type of supernatural insight that He gives to Joseph in this account, only that such occurrences are by nature extremely rare. Even in Joseph's life, these events are rare. He is given insight into these dreams, but he was unaware that Potiphar's wife would accuse him of rape, he was unaware that the Pharaoh's cup-bearer would forget him, and almost every other event in his life, he has no foreknowledge of them.

For the most part, we are to navigate the meaning of our lives and our identities through Godly wisdom, but this wisdom is nothing without the humility to admit that we aren't fully certain of their total, divine, meaning. Even when I counsel people, it is clear that what they want from me is some sort of divine interpretation to their circumstances. They want me to be able to easily define them and then "fix" them in no time flat. They don't understand the complexity of divine meaning, or the discipline necessary to make that meaning manifest in their life.

Take for instance the question of identity. The ancient person took for granted their identity since it was wrapped up in their societal role. But the modern identity is much more complex and spread out. Since we have so much liberty to transition between careers, locations, and even social status' there is nothing fixed about our temporal identities, and so they are necessarily difficult to define or understand. And while the modern Christian impulse is to simply say that our identity is in Christ, this is not an end point to the problem, but a starting point.

In other words, finding our primary significance and root identity in our relationship with God is clearly what we are supposed to do, but this identity doesn't do away with our other identities. In other words, just because I am now a child of God, doesn't erase the fact that I am still the child of my earthly parents, the husband to my wife, the father to my children, and so on. Our identity in Christ doesn't destroy our other identities, it is supposed to hallow them.

Now my identity at work is rooted and related to my identity in Christ, my relationship with my wife and kids is now subordinate to my faith, and so on. This means I still need to discover what my career and family mean to my overall identity as a child of God and learn to navigate that complex landscape with faith and humility. To put this point another way, our identity in Christ doesn't, in itself, solve the modern problem of identity, but it should govern that pursuit. So a Christian can certainly take a personality test, but they would be wrong to believe that this temporal description of their temperament, no matter how accurate, can permanently define them or assure them of their ideal path.

Cultivating Conscience

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

-Romans 8:28-29

With all that being said, where does that leave us in our modern dilemma? Understanding that the will of God is real, but complex might help us in our humility, but the obvious question that we might have is that it seems *possible* for God to grant people divine insight, so why doesn't He do this more often? The mistake that we so easily make in our modern materialistic world is to see the material as being the most important thing. Meaning, that this topic upsets us because we want God to give us guidance in our material lives. We want firm understanding as to the career path we should take, the person we should marry, and many other things. What we don't understand is that the Bible always teaches that the immaterial blessings of God are far superior to the material world.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."

-2 Corinthians 8:9

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

-1 Peter 1:6-7

While it might ease our minds to know the will of God directly, perhaps, the lessons of faith and humility are far more valuable than mere material insight. For what we can easily miss in Joseph's story is that while he is given this incredible, supernatural knowledge of future events, this is not the totality of what made Joseph special. The fact is that Joseph was a man of conscience and integrity. Even though he was, once again, unjustly punished by being sent to prison, he maintained his integrity and kept acting with hard work and determination and within the morality of God.

The modern person who says passionately that they desire to know the will of God for their lives misses out on this point. They believe that meaning would be given to them if only they understood the specific decisions that they should make. When in reality, Joseph had found meaning and identity in the lowest pit in Egypt, he didn't need to interpret these dreams or become rich and powerful to find this. Joseph had found his meaning in learning to cultivate his conscience before the Lord. Because of this, no matter what Joseph did, he found a connection between his work, and his worship of God.

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”

-Colossians 3:23-24

So for the modern person, they are either attracted by these more ancient ways of attaining meaning and identity, or they live as though there is no higher meaning behind anything that they do. The modern Christian is to live somewhere between these extremes. The meaning of our lives is wrapped up in our service of God, and that service can be found in anything that we put our hand to. To learn to be faithful to God, which means adhering to our conscience in whatever we do, is the way to prepare ourselves to hear from God in all areas of our lives.

The reason for this is simple. If the prime will for God in our lives is not found in material things, like career or where we are located, but in spiritual things like our character and our virtues, this means that the main way God speaks to His people is through their conscience. If we are faithless to receive the call of conscience, meaning that we aren't faithful in learning to live in virtue given our present circumstances, we won't be ready to hear from God if He tells us a material purpose for our lives.

Since we are people that have deceptive hearts (Jeremiah 17:7) it is far more likely that when we believe we are hearing from God, we are really listening to the purposes in our own heart. Only the person who has trained themselves to heed the voice of conscience can recognize the voice of God when He speaks to them in the more material aspects of their lives.

“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. “Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

-John 10:3-5

Joseph was a man who was faithful to heed the call of conscience in his life. This is shown when he resisted the temptation of Potiphar’s wife in the previous chapter, and is also shown in the way that he conducts himself as a faithful worker both as a slave and now as a prisoner. Joseph is the kind of person who is a faithful person no matter where he finds himself. Because of this, when God does speak to him directly, he can readily recognize the voice of God that had called to him through his conscience. However, even though he is given a piece of the future, he isn’t given the whole thing.

Since God’s desire for us is not primarily to move us in material ways, but spiritual, God will often keep us from understanding His will in our given circumstances. This is not to discourage us or to harm us, but to train us in dependency and faithfulness towards Him. Joseph has already seen that faithfulness to the call of God has not given him prosperity, since his decision to honor God by denying Potiphar’s wife resulted in him being thrown into prison, he also sees that his faithfulness to Pharaoh’s cup-bearer isn’t directly rewarded. But this doesn’t bother him. His delight and desire is to honor God and to heed His voice no matter what he is called to do.

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.”

-Luke 16:10

To the person who lacks the discipline to do this in the simple things in their life, they won’t be able to heed the voice of God in the more complex. Since God is calling us to be like Him, the call of God will almost always lead the Christian to a form of a cross. Meaning that God while God is ultimately calling the believer to immense prosperity, oftentimes that prosperity is through great material cost. Just as the glory of Christ comes through His death, so the glory of the Christian often comes through great

personal sacrifice. But if we can learn to be faithful in that sacrifice, that in our work and our relationships we can learn more selflessness and faithfulness. That no matter what we choose to do, we do it well, and that we are people of integrity, people of our word, we will find that the voice of God in our life becomes more and more easy to discern against the voice of selfishness and pride that can speak so loudly in our hearts.