

Great Reason to Entrust Ourselves to Our Faithful God!

Genesis 40:1-3, 14-15, 23; 41:14-49 (text)

19 September 2021, Reformed Church of Wainuiomata 10:30 am
(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)¹

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

About two weeks ago – I think we were still in lockdown level 3 – I bumped again into an old dog-lover friend, a retired lady whom I had not seen for two years. In her working years, this lady was a very respected and much-loved receptionist at a medical practice here in Wainui.

Well, straight after saying good morning to me, this is what she said: “Pieter, we’re living in an upside-down world, isn’t it!”

I think she was referring to the ongoing pandemic and the lockdowns we’re having. But she might as well have meant the current *climate changes* with all the recent floods & hurricanes! Or she might even have had in mind our *morally* upside-down world in which things that have always been right are now suddenly wrong, and things that have always been wrong are now suddenly right – all under the name of “Political Correctness!”

My brother & sister, on top of all these upside-down things in *the world out there*, one could still add the upside-down things which you & I suffer *on a personal level*, things like: Loneliness; Relationship pain; Work-and-Income pain; Grieving pain (as we process the loss of a loved one)

Surely, if you & I were to take our eyes off God, the state of the world, combined with our own personal hardships, is enough to drive many into depression!

But, look, God’s purpose with our text is exactly to make you & me look up and entrust ourselves to the providence of our Heavenly Father who knows how to steer His children in/through their upside-down circumstances! You see, here, in a nutshell, is the message of our text: **Child of God, why will you not entrust yourself to God who, in faithful providence, raised His S/servant to save His people?**

And our text presents this message by way of three points...

- Our Upside-Down World
- God’s Faithful Providence
- God’s Faithful Providence in Christ

Our Upside-Down World

If Joseph were to look at his circumstances from a mere human perspective, how would he describe life?

Well, would he not have used the same words as my dog-walker friend: “My life is totally *upside-down*!”?

I mean, here, because of the sin and lies of Mrs. Potiphar, is Joseph sitting in jail – and in a foreign country!

Granted, it was not too bad a jail. After all, it was the *king’s* jail – the place where the king’s prisoners were confined!² What’s more, due to the Godfearing character God had worked in

¹ With much appreciation for the wonderful work of GREIDANUS, Sidney. 2007. Preaching Christ from Genesis: foundations for expository sermons. Grand Rapids, MI : William B Eerdmans. p. 394-409.

² Cf. Gen 39:20, ***So Joseph’s master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.***

Joseph, the prison chief entrusted to Joseph a leadership role in that prison!³ And so, although Joseph was in jail, yet, by God's grace, his situation was not as bad as that of the other prisoners!

But still, it was a jail – not exactly a hotel! And, like the other prisoners, Joseph too was confined, restricted⁴ – yes, locked-up; and worse than our COVID level-4 lockdown! And so, Joseph himself explains his hardship (his upside-down world) to a fellow prison inmate – yes, to the Pharaoh's butler (cup-bearer) whom the Pharaoh, in one of his bad moods, had thrown into that same jail...

Says Joseph (in Gen 40:15), "...*I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here (in this country of Egypt) I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.*"⁵ Not that *that* jail really was a dungeon or a pit like the one Joseph's brothers had thrown him in before they sold him to those slave traders. No, it was just by way of speaking that Joseph used the word "dungeon" – yes, just like you & I often hear people in hardship say, "I have done nothing to deserve this hellhole (indeed, this 'dungeon')!"

And that's how Joseph experienced his imprisonment – as a pit, a deep hole; yes, a dungeon! Look, is that not also why he pleads with Pharaoh's cupbearer, to once he is released from prison and back in Pharaoh's palace, remember Joseph to the Pharaoh; and to get him out of this jail!⁶

See Joseph's hardship!?

Then, to crown it all, when that cupbearer to whom Joseph showed so much kindness & comfort – when he got out of prison, then, he forgot about Joseph, and that even for another two long years!⁷

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes! Think how often Joseph would have thought, "What is that butler doing?" "Could he really have forgotten me?" "When will he tell the Pharaoh about me?"

Well, sometimes the same happens to you & me. Quite often our trial just sits with us – it does not go away... if it ever will! Then, suddenly, the Lord changes our circumstances and, in His grace, takes our hardship away.

And we may ask ourselves, "How come the Lord didn't do it earlier?" "Why did I have to suffer so long?"

My brother & sister, many a child of God who has suffered hardship (whose world was upside-down), has experienced this truth: "*Our extremity is God's opportunity!*"⁸ In other

³ Cf. Gen 39:21-23, *But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper.*

⁴ Cf. Gen 40:3, *So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the same place where Joseph was imprisoned.* (The Hebrew word translated here as "imprisoned," is 'āsūr [אָסַר], a Qal Passive Participle Masculine Singular of 'āsar [אָסַר], tie, bind, imprison. [Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (pp. 63–64). Oxford: Clarendon Press]).

⁵ The word Joseph uses here is bōr (בֹּר), pit, cistern, well – the same as that empty well/pit where Joseph's brothers had thrown him in before they sold him to the slave traders who took him to Egypt (cf. Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (p. 92). Oxford: Clarendon Press).

⁶ Cf. Gen 40:14, *Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house.*

⁷ Cf. Gen 40:23 & 41:1, *Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. ... Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile.*

words, man suffers, and he feels he is pushed and pushed – yes, tested and tested! And he asks, “God, how long!?” “God, do you not see my hardship/misery!?” “O God, please intervene!” Yet, God still does not bring relief! Then, just when the child of God comes to the end of his/her tether, *then* God shows Himself to be faithful. And so, the child of God, first-hand experiences 1 Cor. 10:13, “...***God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.***”⁹

Why does the Lord often wait long?

Well, the LORD has His reasons. Yet, the Bible tells us that God’s delay in removing our trials is often to remind us that it is not because of our own ingenuity that we overcame our hardship¹⁰ – indeed, as the Apostle Paul says, it is “...***so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.***”¹¹

Well, Joseph’s world – his circumstances – was/were upside-down.

And what kept him going during all those years in jail?

His God-given faith constantly fed by God’s wonderful presence!

I mean, remember how often we heard in the previous chapters (especially Gen 39) that *God was with Joseph!*

See, why Joseph even in his misery was able to comfort and strengthen his distraught inmates – the cupbearer and baker of Pharaoh!?

My brother & sister, is your world upside-down? Are you worried? Tired? Scared? If so, then allow me to, on the strength of many Bible verses – also our text – encourage you to keep on entrusting you life and those of your loved ones to God’s care and providence!

You say, “How?”

Well first of all, by not neglecting your personal devotions – keen Bible reading & prayer time! That way, by God’s blessing, you will experience what Joseph had – i.e., God’s presence!

Well, we come to point 2...

God’s Faithful Providence

Finally, a change was to come for Joseph!

How?

⁸ Matthew Henry’s well-phrased saying in his commentary on 2 Cor. 1:9 (cf. Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 2280). Peabody: Hendrickson).

⁹ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*](#). (1995). (1 Co 10:13). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

¹⁰ Cf. e.g., 1 Cor 2:4-5, ***My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, ⁵so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.***

Also, 2 Cor 4:7, ***But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.***

Also, 2 Cor 12:7-9, ***So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.***

¹¹ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*](#). (1995). (2 Co 1:9). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Well, according to our text, the Pharaoh had a dream. And he was distraught, because no one was able to interpret it for him.

And so, finally, after *two* years, the cupbearer's memory is jogged! *Now* he remembers Joseph! And so, he tells the Pharaoh, "O king, I know someone who could help the king!" "It's a young Hebrew, a servant of the prison guard!" "O king, last time when you threw me and your baker in jail, that young Hebrew man interpreted our dreams, and what he said came true – exactly the way he said!"

Well, the Pharaoh did not wait! He gave his orders, and in no time, Joseph was rushed from jail, into a shower & a shave, and dressed into new clothes!

So, suddenly, here stands Joseph – not just as low slave, but also as a low prisoner – right in front of the mighty Pharaoh!

Was he shaking?

Were his legs knocking against one another?¹²

What if he gets it wrong? Will the Pharaoh chop his head off?

Well, what do we see?

An amazing display of God's presence with Joseph!

Indeed, look! When Pharaoh said, "...*I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it*,"¹³ how did Joseph answer?

Well, boldly & in faith, here is what Joseph said, "*It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer*."¹⁴

Wow!

See how a child of God entrusts himself to God – even in his times of testing!? "Mighty Pharaoh, it's *God* – not *me* – who will give you the answer!"

And indeed, when Pharaoh then tells Joseph his two dreams, Joseph, by God's gracious empowering, explains the meaning of the Pharaoh's dreams – and convincingly so; yes, mind-bendingly so – so much so that Pharaoh is immediately persuaded that what Joseph has said is the truth!

No wonder, the Pharaoh bursts out saying to his servants, "*Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?*"¹⁵

So, Pharaoh made Joseph the viceroy (king second in charge) of all of Egypt.¹⁶

Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger (Gen 41:42).

In other words, Joseph now has the authority to, in the king's name, sign all documents!

Next, we read that Pharaoh dressed Joseph *in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck*. Well, gauging by Egyptian customs, putting a gold chain around an official's neck – that was a well-known Egyptian symbol of installation into an office; yes, the highest honours an Egyptian king could bestow on someone.¹⁷

¹² Like Belshazzar's knees (cf. Dan. 5:6)

¹³ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*](#). (1995). (Ge 41:15). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

¹⁴ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*](#). (1995). (Ge 41:16). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation. (Emphasis mine).

¹⁵ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*](#). (1995). (Ge 41:38). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

¹⁶ Cf. Gen 41:40-41

¹⁷ cf. Sarna (apud Greidanus, *ibid*:407)

Well, Pharaoh now acts upon his words, for look at v.43, ***He (Pharaoh) had him (Joseph) ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, “Make way!” (or: “Bow the knee!”)***¹⁸

Then, the king also gives Joseph an Egyptian name – Zaphenath-Paneah.¹⁹ And scholars who know the old Bible languages and Egyptian tell us that this name had the most-likely meaning of, “God speaks, and He lives.”²⁰ And, what an appropriate name, for has God not just shown that He is alive and real – and steering events? Yes, did not God, with this event/action, raise his servant, Joseph, to save the whole then known world, including Joseph’s family (God’s people), from starvation?

So, Joseph springs into action: he gathers 20% of every harvest during the seven years of plenty. And the quantities of grain, became ***“like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he (Joseph) stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.”***²¹

Then came the seven years of hunger!

And, v.57 says, ***the people of all the earth came to Egypt!***²²

And Joseph opened the storehouses and sold food to everyone!

My brother & sister, on the surface, it might have looked as if Joseph was Pharaoh’s instrument of economic survival. But no, he was God’s instrument for saving “the world.”²³

Yes, here is the point of our text: In His providence, the Sovereign God exalted the prisoner Joseph to ruler of Egypt in order to save *the world* from famine!

And is this not a first fulfilment of what God promised Abraham, ***“In you all the families of the earth will be blessed”***?²⁴

Imagine what would have gone through the minds & hearts of the Ancient Israelites every time they heard this “story” – yes, hearing (and hearing again) how God (in His power, sovereign-will and love) raised their ancestor Joseph from a low slave to a powerful ruler in Egypt!

Imagine especially what this story would have meant for Israel at the time when also *they* – just like Joseph – were... *slaves in Egypt!*

Would this story not have led them to entrust themselves to God’s faithful providence!?

¹⁸ In Hebrew אָבָרָךְ = “Bow down!” an Egyptian word, which has been pointed by the Masorites according to the *Hiphal* or *Aphel* of אָבָרָךְ. In Coptic it is *abork, projicere*, with the signs of the imperative and the second person (Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 1, p. 226). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.). The Septuagint avoids this word by just translating, καὶ ἀνεβίβασεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄρμα τὸ δευτέρον τῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐκήρυξεν ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ κήρυξ, καὶ κατέστησεν αὐτὸν ἐφ’ ὅλης γῆς Αἰγύπτου (“And he caused him to mount on his second chariot, and a herald heralded before him, and he placed him over all of the land of Egypt”).

¹⁹ צָפְנָת פָּעֲנֵחַ

²⁰ Cf. the footnote which the NASB gives to Gen 41:45, i.e., “God speaks; He lives.” Also, cf. Wikipedia for, “Georg Steindorff in 1889 offered a full reconstruction of ḏd pꜥ nṯr iw.f ʿnh “the god speaks [and] he lives” (Middle Egyptian pronunciation: ṣa pīr nata yuVf[n 1] anah).[6] This interpretation is philologically plausible and has since become somewhat popular” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaphnath-Paaneah>). Greidanus (ibid:408) endorses the same meaning, “God speaks and lives.”

However, cf. Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 1, pp. 226–227). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, for a different opinion.

²¹ Cf. Gen 41:48-49

²² וְכָל-הָאֲרָצִים בָּאוּ מִצֵּימָה

²³ My adaptation of the well-said words of Greidanus (ibid:409).

²⁴ cf. Gn 12:3 (Emphasis mine)

Would they not have gone, “Joseph, our ancestor – God raised *him* from imprisonment, from being a slave to being the second-in-charge next to Pharaoh!” “And to save the world from famine!”

“Surely, if God knew when exactly to lift our ancestor out of that Egyptian jail, then He will also know when to free us from our Egyptian slavery!”²⁵

My brother & sister, through one man, Joseph, God blessed the world with food!

Well, here is the beauty! You see, what God did through Joseph, He also did – just on an infinitely larger scale – through Jesus of Nazareth..., which brings us to the last point of this sermon...

God’s Faithful Providence in Christ

My brother & sister, also for you & me life on earth can often be upside-down! And, by way of illustration, it was no different for my Ouma (grandmother) on Mum’s side. You see, when she was a little girl of nine, she and her mother lived with many other Afrikaner mothers and children in one of the concentration camps which England had set up in order to quash the fighting spirit of the Afrikaner men at the time of the Anglo-Boer²⁶ war. And in those concentration camps died more than 26,000 women and children – mostly because of poor living conditions and the outbreak of diseases.²⁷

Well, it was in those days, that those Afrikaner women adopted the emblem of the sparrow. Why the sparrow? Well, because it reminded them of Christ’s words of Luke 12:6-7, “***Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.***”²⁸

Well, it was after this ugly war, that the women who survived asked the then prime minister²⁹ to get the emblem of the sparrow onto the lowest South African coin (1/4 penny; today 1 cent), to thank God that they had survived the war and to remind the men and women of South Africa of their true worth in God’s eyes.³⁰

My brother & sister, in their misery & upside-down world, those women entrusted themselves to the providence of God whom they understood knew better.

And they knew that our Lord Jesus is God’s ultimate Servant by whom He saved the world!

After all, Joseph was but a type of Christ! Yes, although Joseph was *a* servant whom God raised to save the then world, Christ is *the* Servant of God whom God raised to save the world!

Yes, remember Jn 3:16?

“For God so loved the... world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal... life.”

²⁵ “After all, remember that God once told our ancestor Abraham that we, his offspring, would be slaves for four hundred years in a foreign country, but that God would punish the nation that would enslave us and that He would then let us come out with great possessions” (cf. Gen 15:13-14 ***Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.***)

²⁶ “Boer” simply means “farmer,” for at that time, most of the Afrikaners in South Africa were farmers.

²⁷ Cf. Second Boer War concentration camps

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War_concentration_camps)

²⁸ ***The Holy Bible: English Standard Version***. (2016). (Lk 12:6–7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

²⁹ General Jan Smuts

³⁰ Cf. **Two sparrows on the Humblest Coin in South Africa** (<https://www.hermanusonline.mobi/two-sparrows-on-the-humblest-coin-in-south-africa>)

Also remember that, although Joseph *gave* bread to the world, our Lord Jesus Himself once said, “***I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry...***” “***I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever...***” (Jn 6:35, 51).³¹

See how Joseph as servant of the Almighty God, was a type of Christ?

I mean...

- As the Spirit of God dwelt in Joseph (v.38),³²so the Spirit of God dwells in Jesus (Mt 3:16).³³
- As Joseph brought God’s word to the Pharaoh, so Jesus is the *living Word* by whom God has brought His message to the world (Heb 1:1-2)!³⁴
- As Joseph was exalted to the right hand of the Pharaoh to rule as king of Egypt, so Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God the Father to rule the nations as the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tm 6:15).³⁵
- As all were commanded to bow before Joseph (v.43), so “at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth...” (Phil 2:10).
- And, as Joseph, with bread, saved many people from death, so Jesus, the bread of life,³⁶ saves many people from eternal death.

My brother & sister, in times of hardship, Ancient Israel found great strength in the Joseph story. It reminded them to entrust themselves to their sovereign God’s good providence!

Well, what the Joseph story was for Ancient Israel, that – just infinitely more – is Jesus Christ for us!

And is not the empty tomb a witness and encouragement to you & me that God powerfully raised His Servant, Jesus Christ, from the dead and made Him King of kings & Lord of lords? And so, in today’s upside-down world (and in your & my personal trials), why will we not entrust ourselves to God who, in faithful providence, raised His Servant to save His people?

Save them from what?

Well, from the guilt of their sin; and, ultimately, from all evil, pain and suffering, when He will bring that new heaven and new earth!

Perhaps someone might say, “But, preacher, are you not preaching a ‘pie-in-the-sky’ message?” “Yes, are you (and the Bible) not trying to comfort us with goodness that we cannot yet enjoy – with blessings that are delayed until the end of time?”

My brother & sister, although God’s kingdom blessings will reach their fulfilment at the end of time, when Christ returns, nevertheless, if you have received Jesus as your Saviour & Lord, God gives you many blessings already here and now – blessings of comfort; of direction; of peace; of a sure & certain hope and trusting that He who made us and saved us,

³¹ Emphases mine!

³² *Then Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?”* (וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה)

(אֶל־עֲבָדָיו הַנִּמְצָא כֹּה־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ)

³³ *After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him.*

³⁴ *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

³⁵ “...which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords...” See also Rv 17:14 and 19:16.

³⁶ Cf. John 6:51

is working all things for the Good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28)!

See why we have the words of Matthew 11:28 outside on our pavement signboard, “***Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest***”?³⁷

AMEN (2934 words excluding footnotes)

³⁷ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (Mt 11:28). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.