READ **REFLECT** **APPLY**

Genesis 40:1-23

THE BUTLER AND THE BAKER

Joseph had been sent to the king's prison accused of a crime which was, according to Egyptian law, usually punished by death. However, he was no stranger to false imprisonment as his brethren had similarly rejected him and sent him to a foreign land, imprisoned as a slave. His faith enabled him to believe that behind these events was the hand of God, moving people and situations to bring about His sovereign plans.

The prison is a place of punishment. Those in it have been found guilty. In what way are we all guilty and who is our judge? (John 3:18-20)

TWO NEW PRISONERS v 1-5 - The chief baker and the chief butler were responsible for ensuring Pharoah's food and drink were nutritious and poison free. However, they were both suspects in a crime, probably one that threatened the king's life. As a result, they were cast into prison reflecting the words of Solomon in Proverbs 16:14 which says 'as messengers of death, is the king's wrath'. There those elite servants of the king met Joseph, a rejected Hebrew slave who served the Almighty God. Joseph looked after them in his appointed role as keeper of the prison with the same care and respect that he gave everyone because he knew that God treats everyone as equal, regardless of their status in this life (James 2:1-4).

TROUBLING DREAMS v 6-8 – whilst doing his morning checks, Joseph noticed that the butler and the baker looked troubled and enquired as to the cause because he cared about them and their mental state. He discovered that they had both had vivid dreams which they felt held a message and wanted to know what it was. Normally they looked to the astrologers and interpreters in Pharaoh's household for help, but of course, in prison, these were not available. However, Joseph's God was always available, and Joseph lived every day with Him, and so he quickly saw an opportunity to reveal God's presence and interest in their lives.

How does Joseph go about sharing his faith in God? How does point to the way that the Lord Jesus would interact with people?

THE BUTLER'S DREAM v 9-15 – the butler described the vine and its three branches, budding and bearing grapes from which he squeezed juice to give Pharaoh. Without hesitation Joseph explained that within three days his job would be restored and he would return to Pharaoh's palace. Having given him God's message, Joseph then gave the butler a message in return. Joseph instructed him, that when his interpretation came true, and he was back in his old job again, he must remember Joseph and their friendship in the prison because he too was innocent, and imprisoned unjustly for crimes he had never committed.

THE BAKER'S DREAM v 16-19 – listening to their conversation, the baker liked what he heard. He assumed that Joseph was no different from all the other interpreters of dreams he had met in Pharaoh's palace who said what their customers hoped to hear. Eagerly he described his dream too, about the three wicker baskets stacked upon his head, full of breads and pastries for the king with the birds feeding upon the contents of the top basket. However, Joseph wasn't like Pharaoh's interpreters. His message came from the Lord, and it was solemn. Within three days Pharaoh would find the baker guilty and he would be hanged upon a tree, and the birds would come down and eat his body.

In what way are these dreams and their fulfilment a picture of fallen humanity and our position before God? (Daniel 12:2-3)

DREAMS COME TRUE v 20-23 – when the third day dawned, Pharaoh had a birthday party for all his servants. The butler was restored to his old job again, but the baker was punished and put to death. Despite this, the butler did not remember Joseph and his words from the Lord. Joseph remained in prison, forgotten and rejected for a further two years. Before we pass judgement on the butler, we should challenge ourselves as to what extent we leave the good news of the gospel bound up in our heart, rather than claiming prophesy of scripture and lifting up the name of Christ.

What enables our restoration and what condemns us to death? (John 3:16)

What is the significance of the wine and the bread? (Matt.26:26-27)

'For nothing is secret that will not be revealed,
Nor anything hidden that will not be known
And come to light.'
Luke 8:17