

# A BROKEN PROMISE

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Deuteronomy 7:9 says, “*Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.*” One of the distinguishing characteristics of our God is His faithfulness in keeping His word. When He makes a promise, He keeps it. This point is also made in 2 Corinthians 1:19-20: “*For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*” When the Lord makes a promise, whether it is a positive or negative one, there is no question concerning whether or not He will keep it. There is only *yes* with Him when it comes to His promises. But it is rare to find a man who follows God’s pattern. Proverbs 20:6 says, “*Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?*” God’s servant Joseph certainly found this to be true.

## **Joseph and the chief butler**

In Genesis chapter 39, Joseph was bound in prison by the false accusation of his master’s wife. “*But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper*” (Gen 39:21-23). While in this position as both prisoner and keeper of the prisoners, he was joined by two new inmates. Genesis 40:1-4 says, “*And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.*” The Lord then gave each of these servants of Pharaoh a prophetic dream (Gen 40:5). They told Joseph their dreams and Joseph gave them the interpretation, which came from God. The chief butler had dreamed of a vine, “*and in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: and Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand*” (Gen 40:9-11). “*And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh’s cup into his hand, after*

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(continued)

the former manner when thou wast his butler.” Three days later, on Pharaoh’s birthday, Pharaoh “made a feast unto all his servants,” and at that time “he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand” (Gen 40:20-21). Before the chief butler was released from prison and got his old job back, Joseph made a request: “But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon” (Gen 40:14-15). However, when Joseph’s interpretation was fulfilled and he was back in his position, Genesis 40:23 says, “*Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.*”

## **Two years later**

After this, Joseph remained wrongly imprisoned for two full years (Gen 41:1). Then Pharaoh was given two dreams by the Lord, which no one in Egypt was able to interpret (Gen 41:1-8). “Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, *I do remember my faults this day: 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: and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 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. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged*” (Gen 41:9-13). Pharaoh then called Joseph, and Joseph interpreted his dreams, and Joseph was then promoted as leader of all Egypt under only Pharaoh himself. The good news is that the chief butler eventually repented of his unfaithfulness and Joseph was finally released from prison. The bad news is that his unfaithfulness cost Joseph two more years of wrongful imprisonment in an Egyptian jail. What a contrast between the faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of man! Yet God *requires* His children to be like Him rather than like mankind (and like we were ourselves in time past): “*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*” (1 Cor 4:2). And this faithfulness must be exhibited down to the smallest of matters. Luke 16:10 says, “*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*” Being a “covenant breaker” is listed among the characteristics of this wicked world, those who are “worthy of death” per the judgment of God (Rom 1:29-32). For two full years, Joseph felt the truthfulness of the words of Proverbs 25:19: “*Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.*” May we ever strive to be faithful like God, and not like the chief butler was to Joseph.