

*Read also I Peter 1:3-9, 13-16. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

Peace in the Valley. The valley is not desirable. Shadows rise early in the valley every evening and fade late in the morning. The valley holds the darkness in as if clinging to it. “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4).

Valleys are sometimes known to be without water—Death Valley; and they are the first to flood. *How will there be peace in the valley?* Joseph was in a valley. Let’s hear the story. READ Genesis 40.

How powerful is the government? These images speak for themselves. I remember the first time Dean and I traveled to Asia (before 9/11), we were very surprised that governmental regulations required that the airline take our toiletries and seal them into a box, returning them to us stateside. We might make a bomb out of toothpaste, so they had to remove it from us.

Another time when in Italy, we were shocked to see military guards at the train stations. Then once we attended a World Cup soccer game and police in riot gear lined the outside of the stadium.

How powerful is the government? When I was a child they could draft young men into the military. They can put you in jail, see your emails, track your expenditures, and take your money for taxes. They can garnish your wages and take your possessions. Not everything is bad, of course. But I think we can agree—government is quite powerful.

This story proves that has always been the case.

- The baker was thrown into jail by the king of Egypt.
- The cupbearer was thrown into jail by the king, both because “they offended their lord.”

Joseph understood how powerless an individual could be. He said, “In fact I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon” (Gen 40:14-15).

So all the men were subject to the whim of the leaders of the state, and all of their lives were at stake. What was Joseph to do?

His dreams must have become farther and farther away in his heart and mind—just myths now. At the time of meeting the baker and cupbearer, eleven years had passed. We don’t know how those years were divided, how long he worked for Potiphar and how long he was imprisoned. We do know he had no trial, no hearing, and no justice. He was helpless and alone.

He was definitely in a valley. How do you think his faith was doing?

Actually, he still believed in God. He told the men, “Don’t interpretations come from God?” Perhaps he secretly prayed, *God please tell me what their dreams mean so I can help them.*

At the same time, after Joseph interpreted the cupbearer's dream he asked him for help. He was, after all, right hand man for the Head of State. Joseph was counting on the cupbearer to get him out of there. That shows how needy he was. He was struggling with his imprisonment.

What do you think are his chances of getting help from this guy?

We know the answer of course. The cupbearer would do nothing for Joseph, once he was out of the dungeon. What could Joseph turn? What would you do?

If you were God, and you were all powerful over the nations, what would you want for your children? Peter tells us what God wants you to know:

God is protecting you by his power until you receive your salvation . . . There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold - though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet 1:5-9).

Joseph had some growing to do in the faith department. He had faith. God was even giving him the gift of interpretation of the dreams, but Joseph was not yet seeing beyond the world system. He in fact clung to the world system and expected to get help from it.

Do you agree that it is easier to remain where you can see things? "I can take care of myself." That is a universal reality. We tend to cling to what is tangible in this world and resist living by faith. This is true even in the animal kingdom. We all like our security, and it's a lot easier when we can see it.

Take an eagle, for example. An eagle's nest is an impressive structure. It envelops the tree. Its outer structure is made of jagged sticks, briars, and vines, but the inner nest is thick with soft leaves, feathers, and straw. It's comfy for the eggs and baby eaglets. (see picture)

Parents offer room service to their children. ☺

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeChqYOTqrE>  
(BEGIN VIDEO AND LET RUN WHILE GINGER CONTINUES THE MESSAGE.)

But there comes a time when the baby bird has to relocate, learn to fly, and enter the world. And those little eaglets do so with some help from their parents, who at the right time start taking apart the nest. The nest is no longer comfortable. The parents have clawed out the soft inside lining, and sharp twigs protrude. As you can see, this nest seems to be barely hanging in the tree now. It is no longer comfortable. It's unstable. Protective parents feed the children, whose little

beaks are hanging open, just waiting to be fed. But soon, the parents will leave them alone. If they do not leave, the parents do not even feed them.

The time has come to move out there. The parent knows that the children must stretch their own wings. Just like God knew in order for Joseph to do the job God had planned for him, to fulfill the dreams, to lead God's effort, he would have to learn to see things he could not see with his eyes. He would have to trust God, and that He is more powerful than the government.

There's the bird—out of the nest, oops, now back to it; then inch by inch, balancing, testing his wings, getting out on a limb. It takes faith to stand there and feel the instability of the branch as it waves under the weight of the bird. Notice, the parents are nowhere to be seen now. Did Joseph see God's presence when he was in the dungeon? Yet he took the step of faith of trusting God when he interpreted the dreams.

The eaglet is flapping and flapping now, but it sure is hard to let go. It seems to take forever. That's sort of like Joseph saying to the cupbearer, *will you help me please?* He could see the cupbearer. He knew he worked for the king, thus the cupbearer was his only resource. Or was he?

Can I do it? The bird clings to the branch. Well, maybe not. Who will help me? Maybe if I just *lean forward* . . .

Sometimes eaglets will not leave the nest, so the father will take some food and tease him, carrying a fish near the nest and then dropping the food out of reach. If they did not go after it, they will go hungry.

The word Joseph used to make his request of the cupbearer shows he thought the cupbearer, not God, would help him. He asked the man for "hesed," something usually expected from God, a word used to describe God's character toward us. It means "lasting loyalty, rich in faithfulness, grace." The Bible describes God only as having true "hesed" toward His people.

Joseph was expecting to receive care and loyalty from a governmental official. But God knew Joseph must understand that the true source of lasting loyalty, deep faithfulness, and grace is God himself. Joseph would have to wait an unfavorably long time without seeing a thing so that he could "see" the love, loyalty, and care of God, which was far more powerful than human governments would ever be.

During this experience of being forgotten, something happened. Joseph was learning to trust what he could not see. Sometimes God has to boot us out of our comfort zone to help us mature in faith.

Are you struggling with grasping onto what you can see? Do you expect your security to come from the people and structures around you? Sometimes God makes you wait in the valley so that you learn to trust Him alone. Let the character-building wisdom of God teach you, and you too will soar like an eagle.

Amen