

Lesson 46
Joseph Prepared To Do God's Work

Genesis 39:1-40:23

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The life of Joseph, more than any other character of the Old Testament, portrays God's providential dealings with His own, for the record repeatedly says that God was with Joseph. Joseph is a good example of how God loves His own and has a wonderful plan for their lives.

B. Joseph also displays to the reader the wonderful character trait of faithfulness to God and to man. Faithfulness makes the man of God useful to the Lord (1 Cor. 4:2).

II. FAITHFULNESS TO GOD 39:1-23

A. Joseph Prospered God (39:1-6)

1. Joseph was sold into slavery to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, by the Midianite traders (Ishmaelites). NOTE. Slavery is no fun and this would have finished the average man. But Joseph was a child of God and had God on his side (Rom. 8:31).

2. God was with Joseph and prospered him greatly. Joseph's secret was his great confidence in God. NOTE. Joseph did not complain about his adverse circumstances but knew that God was with him and that he was in the center of God's will.

3. Joseph found grace in Potiphar's eyes and he was made the chief overseer over the master's house and over all the possessions. NOTE. It still stands true: God will honor those who honor God. NOTE. Joseph's experience as overseer of the house of Potiphar stood him in good stead when he became overseer of the entire land of Egypt. God was schooling Joseph for a more responsible position.

4. God prospered Potiphar's house because of Joseph. NOTE. God often blesses unbelievers because of a true believer in the midst of them.

5. Joseph was "handsome and good-looking" (RSV). Only a few men in the Bible are described as handsome (David, Absalom and Daniel). NOTE. Joseph had it all: brains, good looks and above all a spiritual heart for God.

B. Joseph Tempted by Potiphar's Wife (39:7-12)

1. The wife of Potiphar sought to seduce Joseph through sexual immorality. She probably reasoned that Joseph being a mere slave was her property through Potiphar.

2. The temptation came and the only reason Joseph could ward it off was his deep confidence in God. Joseph refused to lie with her because it would break Potiphar's trust in him and above all it would be a "sin against God" (39:9). NOTE. Sin is against God and only a deep sense of responsibility to God can keep one from falling into temptation when it comes. NOTE. Temptations build character, for sin lies not in being tempted, but in yielding to the temptation.

3. This woman pursued Joseph "day after day" but he would not "lie by her, or to be with her." Joseph would not consent to the woman's coaxing and even exercised care against being in her presence. NOTE. Romans 13:14 says, "Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill

the lusts thereof.” It is also the devil’s lie that every man has his price or every man will succumb to sexual immorality if pursued long enough.

4. Quite by accident Joseph found himself in the house alone with this seductive woman, and she begged him to lie with her. But Joseph fled the scene before anything could happen (2 Tim. 2:22). NOTE. This circumstance, while not directed by God, was permitted by Him as a link in the chain to get Joseph into Pharaoh’s graces.

C. Joseph Falsely Accused and Cast into Prison (39:13-23)

1. When Joseph fled he spurned her charm and her ego was injured. Striking back in the heat of wounded pride, she framed Joseph with a lie. She accused him of attempted rape (39:13-16).

2. Mrs. Potiphar told her husband this lie and sadly enough he believed her (39:19). NOTE. It is true that “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.”

3. Potiphar became angry and threw Joseph into prison. Joseph, without saying a word, goes to jail. He did not speak up because he was happy about going to prison. He knew he was innocent and he knew that God had a plan for his life. He did not understand what God was doing but he accepted it by faith (Rom. 8:28). NOTE. Joseph was the only patriarch that God did not appear to personally by direct revelation and yet God was marvelously leading and directing in his life. Christians today do not have to have direct revelation from God to have the providential leading and guiding of God. Joseph lived by faith and all believers are to live by faith as well.

4. But the Lord was with Joseph and he gained favor with the keeper of the prison and Joseph was put in charge of all the prisoners (39:21-23). NOTE. It was obviously the will of God that Joseph should be in prison. He had to meet the butler who in turn would mention Joseph to Pharaoh. God was at work and even the smallest details were in His plan.

III. FAITHFULNESS TO MEN 40:1-23

A. Joseph Meets the Butler and Baker of Pharaoh (40:1-8)

1. The butler and baker of Pharaoh had incurred his wrath for reasons not stated. They were thrown in prison and they were placed under Joseph who had been put in charge of all the prisoners. NOTE. Joseph had made the best of his circumstances. He learned to be faithful in little things. Faithfulness in smaller things became stepping-stones to the strategic opportunity of doing more significant things. He would rise from prison to leadership in Egypt.

2. The butler and baker each had a dream but could not interpret it. Joseph was persuaded he could interpret these dreams because “interpretations belong to God” and God was with Joseph (40:7-8).

B. Joseph Interprets the Dreams (40:9-19): Joseph tells the butler that in three days he would be released from prison and be restored as butler to Pharaoh (40:9-13). He then asks the butler to remember him to Pharaoh and bring him out of prison (40:14-15). This indicates that Joseph did not like prison at all and wanted out, for he was there for something he did not do. Then Joseph interprets the baker’s dream and says that within three days he will be hung by Pharaoh (40:16-19) NOTE. Joseph was very honest and always spoke the truth even when it hurt and surely the truth of impending death was not pleasant for the baker.

C. Joseph is Forgotten (40:20-23): The butler was released from prison to serve Pharaoh again but he “forgot” Joseph (40:23) and he did not make mention of Joseph’s name to Pharaoh for two whole years (41:1). The butler did not forget Joseph but he was a greedy man and probably waited for a right opportunity to arise before he mentioned Joseph to Pharaoh. He was waiting for a golden

opportunity that would work to his advantage and he would find favor with Pharaoh. NOTE. Two long years elapsed before the baker said anything to Pharaoh. Were these wasted years for Joseph? No, God was teaching Joseph patience and building his character there in prison. Joseph learned that there is something far more satisfying than pleasing man and that is pleasing God and doing His will no matter what the circumstances may be. This is probably the deepest joy in life. NOTE. Again we see the providence of God, for had Joseph been released from prison at the same time the butler was, then Joseph would have probably been out of the country before Pharaoh had his dreams. God's plan is perfect and always on schedule.