

JOSEPH: PAYING THE PRICE FOR FAITHFULNESS

Genesis 39

In the midst of the struggles of life, it doesn't always look like God's in control!

Sometimes we wonder! There are days when it doesn't feel like it!

From Joseph's perspective, in Egypt, it often didn't *feel* like God was in control!

Even in a pagan nation, God is in charge.

It doesn't look like it! It doesn't *feel like it!*

But, as story develops, it's evident God's at work behind the scenes, directing events in to prepare Joseph to deliver God's people.

Two distinct scenes develop:

Both begin with **evidence of God's presence and blessing** in his life.

He climbs the ladder from the *bottom* up—then placed in charge of *everything!*

Both demonstrate the **faithfulness of the suffering servant** to do God's will

Both end with **the humbling of the faithful servant**, in spite of his faithfulness and God's presence and blessing.

JOSEPH REMAINS FAITHFUL IN A PAGAN LAND

Faithful before God **and** man – *though man didn't always recognize it!*

JOSEPH PROSPERS IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE 39:1-6a

Joseph sold to captain of Pharaoh's guard when he arrived there.

God is with Joseph.

God blesses Joseph.

God prospered Joseph and blessed Potiphar because of him.

Joseph receives grace in his master's eyes.

It's evident to Potiphar that God was with Joseph and blessing him

Joseph receives greater responsibility.

Potiphar trusts Joseph with everything he owned

God blesses Potiphar's house because of Joseph.

Therefore he appoints him overseer over his whole house.

He knew he could trust Joseph!

JOSEPH FACES TEMPTATION FROM POTIPHAR'S WIFE 39:6b-20

Joseph's faithfulness 6b-12

Joseph faces repeated temptations.

Because of his attractive appeal and success, Potiphar's wife was attracted to Joseph and tried to seduce him

Someone raised the issue: how could a beautiful married woman in her 20's, fall for an old, fat, bald man in his 60s? Though we have trouble imagining it, it happens all the time, when people perceived to be successful are willing to *listen*. Hurting people everywhere want *anyone* willing to listen!

The very characteristics that led to God's blessing made him attractive to her but made his resistance more important.

Joseph responds with consistent faithfulness. He's trustworthy!

His resistance to the temptation was the natural result of his trust in God's purpose for him.

Slaves weren't expected to be bound by high values!

Joseph's response is motivated by trust and gratitude.

Awareness of God's presence motivates Joseph to resist temptation.

Convinced he was chosen by God, Joseph would not sin against God.

Aware that God was with him as he faithfully served Potiphar, he would not do wickedly against either master.

He could not succeed by defying God or betraying his master!

Out of loyalty to his master and obedience to God's standards, Joseph refuses her advances.

Joseph took a stand for integrity—he was **faithful to God's standards!**

Joseph refused because of the position of trust he had

She was the only thing Potiphar hadn't turned over to his care

To give in would be to sin against both God and his master **39:9**

*No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. **How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?***

The issue wasn't *primarily* offending Potiphar—the bottom line was that he wouldn't sin against **GOD!**

It doesn't really matter what people think about his conduct.

What matters is that GOD knows!

God affirms his faithfulness—that's what counts!

Nevertheless, she persisted in her attempts to seduce him.

Joseph deliberately and wisely resisted her attempts by refusing to even be around her!

He was determined to say no!

He knew better than to expose himself to that kind of temptation!

If we're going to fulfill God's plan, we can't take a chance by sinning against God Who is calling us.

When she grabbed his garment, he fled from her.

You can't willfully sin against God and continue to enjoy His presence and blessing.

Joseph's Accusation 13-18

Doing what's right did not result in immediate reward!

He was thrown in prison without a hearing and without justice.

Joseph's spiritual victory resulted in suffering

Hurt by Joseph's rejection, she sets out to make him pay!

She presents the garment he left in her hands as evidence that he attempted to assault her.

She invents a lie to accuse him of sexual harassment.

She manipulates her audience by playing on their emotions.

Before the servants she accuses Potiphar of insulting them by bringing a Hebrew slave like Joseph into the house.

Before Potiphar she accuses Joseph of insulting her.

In both cases she blames the husband—*"YOU brought this slave into our house, and look what he did!"*

In spite of all he knows about Joseph, Potiphar has to believe her.

It's easier to blame him than admit the truth about his wife.

He knows better! But if she's guilty, it makes him look bad!

So they conspire to keep the secret and blame Joseph.

In spite of his righteous stand, Joseph is condemned.

Thus Joseph ends up in jail. *It certainly doesn't feel like God's in charge!*

Joseph's punishment 19-20a

JOSEPH PROSPERS IN PRISON 39:20b-23 Success in prison/repeated description

God is with Joseph.

Four times in the chapter we're told God is with Joseph (2-3, 21, 23)

While God was with Joseph, the reward for faithfulness wasn't immediate. But God did intervene in his behalf.

God blesses Joseph.

Even in jail in a pagan country, the Lord is with Joseph in prison and continues to bless him there.

The renewed blessing of God confirms God's approval of Joseph's faithfulness.

Joseph did the right thing, even though he suffered for it!

He gains the respect of the prison warden.

Joseph receives grace in his master's eyes

Joseph receives greater responsibility.

The warden trusts him and puts him in charge of everything in the prison.

This is the 2nd time he prospers in Egypt and is placed in charge over the local people.

Again the Lord gives him success in everything he did

Joseph remains faithful to GOD's standards—even in a pagan land!

LESSONS WE LEARN FROM JOSEPH'S EXAMPLE:

1. Doing the right thing doesn't always guarantee good results.

It doesn't always work out like we think it's going to!

That doesn't mean we're wrong to do what's right.

Do what's right anyway!!

We're responsible for our faithfulness, not for others' reaction.

2. It may be easier to cave in to the pressure pagan culture imposes than to remain faithful to God.

After all, you're in a pagan culture.

No one will know—no one will care!

For Joseph it mattered that GOD knows and God cares!

He couldn't betray his commitment to remain faithful to God's standards—whether anybody else cared or not!

As in Proverbs, warns us of folly of yielding to the temptation of a flattering man or woman.

That would ruin the prospect of a life of faithful service to God.

It's not worth the price!

3. People who believe that God has a plan to bless us aren't willing to sacrifice it on the altar of pleasure!

Though Joseph paid a high price for his faithfulness, ultimately he could trust God to bless him as He had promised.

Joseph sets an example for God's people to follow.

4. If we want to fulfill God's plan, we must be faithful.

Living in a pagan land presents many temptations.

If we want God to use us, we must cling to His standards.

Joseph was faithful because he was convinced that God had a plan to use him for His glory.

He didn't bawl her out for her standards.

He was just careful to explain why his standards were important for him!

God hasn't put us here to criticize our culture—but to shine a light by our conduct, and to proclaim good news—the Gospel!—to pagan people in our neighborhood!

A commitment to fulfill God's calling will motivate us to say no to the pressure and remain faithful.

Only faithful obedience makes us useful for God's glory.

5. If we wait for the temptation to come before making a commitment to faithfulness, it always comes too late!

If you wait to make the commitment, you'll never make it under the pressure of the moment!!!

ARE WE COMMITTED TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD IN OUR PAGAN LAND?