

GENESIS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 39 as we continue our study through the Word of God. If you remember from our last study in Genesis chapter 37, Joseph, the son of Jacob, had two dreams from God. One showed his 11 brothers bowing down before him and the other had his mother, father and 11 brothers bowing down before him. Obviously his brothers didn't like what they heard and they hated Joseph for it. They were envious of what God was doing in his life and that envy was going to eat at them.

Then one day a situation arose when they could take care of this dreamer and put an end to his dreams. Jacob, Joseph's father sends him to find out how his brothers are doing and I get the feeling that Jacob didn't trust these guys. Now as Joseph tracks them down they plot to kill him. But instead, they sell him to Midianite traders who in turn sell Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of his guard.

In chapter 38 the focus is on Judah, another son of Jacob, and his ungodly behavior. Tonight, as we look at Genesis chapter 39, starting in verse 1, we will pick-up the story of Joseph, who is down in Egypt, a slave. And let me say this, the story of Joseph is fascinating and it is encouraging. I hope you are blessed as much as I have been blessed as we go through these chapters. So, with that said, let's dig into God's Word and see what He has for us this evening.

GENESIS 39**VERSE 1**

1. Joseph is a slave in the house of Potiphar, who is a **“captain of the guard”** for Pharaoh. It speaks of him being “chief of the executioners,” and thus, this is not the guy you want to mess with, especially if you were a slave! The name “Potiphar” means, “devoted to the sun,” which was the local deity of On, a town of lower Egypt and known also by its Greek name, Heliopolis.

VERSES 2-3

1. How would you respond if you were put in a situation like this? Joseph did nothing wrong and yet; here he is a slave in Egypt. What an example we see here for us to learn and apply to our lives. Joseph didn't complain, he was not angry, in fact, he did the best job he could do in the situation he was in and God blessed him for his faithful service in spite of the situation.

Joseph was a successful slave, not a way you would think of a slave, being successful, but Joseph was. And because of his work ethics, Potiphar saw the hand of God upon his life! Do you understand that? This pagan man who worshiped the sun god saw that the God of Joseph not only blessed Joseph, but he was blessed because of Joseph!

In your job, does your boss see God working in you and through you? “But you don’t know what a jerk my boss is!” “You don’t know my work situation, the way they talk and the things that they do!” Folks, Joseph was a slave in Egypt and even in the house of an idolater, he allowed the light of God to shine brightly through him. Thus, may we all do the same no matter where we work or how difficult the situation is!

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 3:17, “**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**”

You see, by His strength, we can do that!

VERSES 4-6

1. Do you want the place you work to be blessed? Then, instead of complaining, being angry, doing a half-hearted job, do your best and pray for your job. Allow godliness to flow from your life and it will affect others. I am amazed how often people won’t tell a certain joke or say a certain thing because I am around and they will even comment on that. You see, godliness will prevail over evil but it is not always easy. Think about the situation that Joseph was placed in. He was 17 years old, he knew nothing of the language, the culture, the customs of Egypt and yet he not only learned them, but he had to do his daily work! He was a man who was more interested in bringing glory to God than pouting over the situation he was in!

VERSES 7-10

1. When God is working in a persons life, when God's using someone the Devil wants to step in and stop that work, and we see that here. The wife of Potiphar is making goo-goo eyes at Joseph; she propositioned him by saying, "**Lie with me.**" Talk about a strong temptation, but it won't be the first or the last time Satan tempts people. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 10:13, "**No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**" I don't care what temptation, what kind of sin you find yourself in, it is not unique. Don't go thinking, "No one understands what I'm going through!" It is all common to man, it is sin! And the only way out of those situations is to surrender to the Lord, to be obedient to Him, to follow God's desire for your life!

2. Did you notice that Joseph did not try to justify this or rationalize this, he closed the door to it! He tells Potiphar's wife that her husband trusts him, has placed him in charge of the household and if he committed this sin, yes, it would affect people but he would be sinning against God! Now this was not a one-time proposition by her, but day in and day out she flirted, tempted Joseph but Joseph was obedient to the Lord and not the flesh.

You see, Obedience is much easier when we know who God is. Spurgeon wrote, “When I regarded God as a tyrant, I thought sin a trifle; but when I knew him to be my father, then I mourned that I could ever have kicked against him. When I thought that God was hard, I found it easy to sin; but when I found God so kind, so good, so overflowing with compassion, I smote upon my breast to think that I could ever have rebelled against one who loved me so, and sought my good.” That is the perspective we need to have!

VERSES 11-12

1. I think Potiphar’s wife usually got what she wanted and when Joseph kept refusing her advances she took the situation into her own hands. The house was empty except for her and Joseph and she grabbed him, and said, “**Lie with me.**” And folks, like I have said, there is all kinds of justification we can come up with for our sin, but in the end, it is still **SIN!** Joseph fled away in his underwear; she had his outer garment in her hand!

The Bible tells us to flee fornication, flee idolatry, to flee youthful lusts and that is exactly what Joseph did. And don’t think for a minute if you are 30 or 40 or 50 or 80 you can’t have youthful lusts. It is not about your age, but your heart! And if you notice, God did provide a way out for Joseph but Joseph needed to take those steps and flee, not linger. And folks, isn’t it better to flee than to fall? Of course it is! And please understand that Joseph knew his stand for godliness, for what was right, for purity was going to cost him dearly, but he was willing to stand up for what was right rather than succumbing to sin!

2. I remember a story that Pastor Raul Reis told years ago. There was a woman in his church who was going through a very difficult time and she was crying and Raul thought he would go over and try to help her, comfort her. When he knocked on the door he was shocked. You see, when she opened the door she was in her birthday suit, she was naked! Raul said he did not say a word, did not debate anything, he just ran! That is what we must do when faced with sin, run from it and in doing so we run into the arms of God!

VERSES 13-18

1. I think Potiphar's wife was angry that she couldn't get what she wanted, Joseph, and thus, she cries rape! She tells the servants in her house, she tells her husband that Joseph tried to rape her and thus, this situation will have to be dealt with, it can no longer be ignored. Potiphar, the chief of the executioner's will deal with it and keep in mind that rape was a capital crime, Joseph should have been put to death for what he did or was accused of doing!

VERSES 19-20

1. I think Potiphar was put in a difficult situation here. His wife accused Joseph of trying to rape her and yet he knew Joseph and the integrity of this young man and he knew his wife! You see, I don't think this was the first time that she did something like this. But Potiphar had to do something and instead of putting Joseph to death, he gave him a life sentence in prison! It is as Kidner wrote, "Death was the only penalty Joseph could reasonably expect. His reprieve presumably owed much to the respect he had won; and Potiphar's mingled wrath and restraint may reflect a faint misgiving about the full accuracy of the charge."

2. Think of the situation that Joseph is in. His brothers throw him into a pit wanting to kill him. Instead they make a profit off of him by selling him to Midianite traders. They in turn make a profit off Joseph by selling him in Egypt as a slave to Potiphar. He serves Potiphar faithfully for a number of years and now he is falsely accused of trying to rape Potiphar's wife. Thus, he is thrown into prison, this subterranean dungeon, which may have been attached to Potiphar's home. At this point, and even before, many would feel, "What is the use. I don't know what God is doing, I don't know what I am doing, but it must be wrong. Look at all that is happening to me all because I was trying to do what God wanted me to do. It is not worth it anymore!" Before you travel down that path, listen to what Joseph does, he is a great example of what we are to do.

VERSES 21-23

1. This tells me that Joseph was not only a faithful slave for Potiphar, but he was also a faithful prisoner and the “**keeper of the prison.**” the man under Potiphar, elevated Joseph to a place of authority in the prison! You see, Joseph did not give up because his situation was bad. He stayed strong because he had God’s Word to him and Joseph believed that what God had promised to him He was more than able to bring to pass! Thus, he served as a prisoner faithfully!

2. Now, how many of you, as you read this story see Joseph in the center of God’s will? We all should but as we look at the circumstances, it looks like Joseph blew it. But folks, listen carefully, he didn’t! How can I know that? Listen:

A. In Genesis 39:2 we are told: “**The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.**”

B. In Genesis 39:3 we are told: “**And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.**”

C. In Genesis 39:5 we are told: “**So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field.**”

D. In Genesis 39:21 we are told: **“But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”**

E. And in Genesis 39:23 we are told: **“The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.”**

In other words, the Lord was with Joseph in spite of the circumstances that surrounded him. Isn't that what Paul tells us in Romans 8:28, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.”** God has a plan, He knows what He is doing, and we just need to walk in the Spirit so we do not do the works of the flesh!

Also, Paul, in prison in Rome and awaiting to be executed, put to death for his faith in Jesus Christ, tells us in II Timothy 2:8-10, **“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”** In other words, as long as you are walking with the Lord it doesn't matter where you are at, God will use you for His glory and yes, it may not always be easy but God will give you the strength you need to endure if you look to Him. It is as Clarke tells us, “It is but of little consequence where the lot of a servant of God may be cast; like Joseph he is ever employed for his master, and God honours him and prospers his work.”

GENESIS 40

VERSES 1-4

1. Two of Pharaoh's servants; the butler who was in charge of Pharaoh's wine and the baker who was in charge of Pharaoh's food, made the king angry and both were put into prison. Now please understand that this was no small charge against them. I believe that one of them was plotting to kill the king, poison him and the king was not sure which one, so he put them both in prison. That makes sense to me, he didn't want to take any chances!

2. Now, who is the captain of the guard who was overseeing this prison? We don't have to guess because Genesis 39:2 tells us that it was Potiphar, interestingly enough! Thus, Potiphar knew the charges against Joseph were false and thus, he treats Joseph kindly and places these two men with Joseph.

3. Keep in mind that Joseph is in charge, the boss of the prisoners you might say but he does not let that go to his head. How do I know that? Because he *SERVES* the butler and baker! Folk's, that truly is the heart of a child of God, he will serve others. Jesus reminds us in Mark 10:45, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

In the church today many have lost that mentality and they are only interested in what they can get, not what they can give to others. How sad. Jesus said in Mark 9:35, **“And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’”** In other words, God has given you a gift, a talent; use it for the building up of the body of Christ. Joseph served not because he had to, but because he wanted to serve the Lord, it was an honor to serve the Lord in any capacity, in any situation, even when it was not fair, may we feel the same way! God did bless Joseph for his faithfulness in service. May we use the gifts that God has given to us to serve others, to bless them!

VERSES 5-7

1. I want you to notice here how Joseph is not self-centered, consumed by all that is happening to him but he is others-centered. You see, he saw the change in the butler and baker, that something was troubling them and was concerned, he had compassion upon them and he wanted to know why they were so sad. Think about it. A person filled with anger, bitterness, hate will not care for others because they are focused on themselves. But Joseph, you might say that he walked in the Spirit because the Fruit of the Spirit flowed from his life. Paul put it like this in Galatians 5:22-26, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”**

You see, the Fruit of the Spirit is *LOVE, AGAPE LOVE*, and that is manifested in these different ways: joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That is what should flow from our lives, the Fruit of the Spirit!

VERSE 8

1. Obviously these dreams were troubling to these men but Joseph wants these men to understand that God alone gives the interpretations to dreams. This is not about Joseph but it is about God. God uses Joseph as a vessel to work through but Joseph does not want the glory, he gives the glory to God, the one who deserves it. That is the way it should be!

The Lord tells us in Isaiah 42:8-9, **“I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them.”** And remember what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:26-31, **“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’”** God tells us, He warns us: don’t touch the money; men, don’t touch the women and ladies, don’t touch the men; and don’t touch the glory!

VERSES 9-11

1. The butler, the one who served the king his wine, God spoke to him in a dream with things that were familiar to him. But he had not idea what it meant!

VERSES 12-15

1. In the interpretation of this dream God does not give Joseph some vague answer but He was very specific. In three days the butler was going to be restored to his position with Pharaoh. Folks, only God knows the beginning from the end and He let's us know ahead of time. In Isaiah 44:6-8 we are told, **“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, Since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, Let them show these to them. Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.’”** You see, no one else can do this and thus, what God has shown us in His Word, we are His witnesses to the world and we need to share this with them, pointing them to Jesus!

2. One other point here. Joseph asks the butler to remember him when he is released in three days. That he would speak with Pharaoh telling him that he, Joseph did not belong in prison. Was Joseph lacking faith here, trying to help God out, not trusting God? I don't believe so. He was just being wise and taking those steps to see what God was going to do. Obviously God gave this man a dream and now God gave Joseph the interpretation, could this be used to get Joseph's release? It will be but not according to the way we think or in the timeframe we think it should take place.

VERSES 16-19

1. And the baker said, “Can anyone else interpret dreams!” I’m sure the baker saw that the butler had a good interpretation of his dream and thus, so must he! Not so. You see, in three days the baker will be put to death. That tells me the butler didn’t do it, like you thought! You see, it was the baker who was planning the assassination attempt on Pharaoh! Thus, the baker will be put to death and the butler will be restored!

2. Boice makes this interesting observation regarding what Joseph did by interpreting both these dreams. He writes, “How many there are who are willing to preach the cupbearer’s sermon but are unwilling to preach the baker’s sermon!” When I read that, I thought how true of a statement that really is.

Joseph could have ignored the bad interpretation but he would have been wrong. You see, Joseph was faithful in delivering both the good and bad news and so must we. It is the whole counsel of God and not just what we like or that which is good. Paul put it like this in Acts 20:26-30 as he shared with the Ephesian elders or pastors, **“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”**

In other words, he equipped the people to stand strong in the faith so the wolves that were teaching false doctrine will not influence them. That is my passion as you know and thus, you get the whole council of God! And folks, there will be times you have to share with people things that they don't like to hear, do it in love but don't negate it just because you might hurt their feelings. Be a God pleaser and not a man pleaser!

VERSES 20-23

1. Just as Joseph said would take place, came to pass. For Joseph, he was probably counting down those three days until he is released! And, as both men are released, the butler is restored to his position and the baker is put to death. For Joseph, "Today is the day I will be released!" But that day went by and nothing. The next day went by, and the next, and the next, and the next, and the next and nothing! He is still in that dungeon! And next week we will see how those days that were going by ended up being 2 full years!

How forgetful is the butler and do you really want a guy making your wine who is that forgetful? I don't think so! I do believe that God influenced him or made him forget. But why did God do that? Doesn't that seem unfair? The reason is simple. If Joseph was released, the famine would still be in the future. Thus, Joseph would have been released and not part of Pharaoh's kingdom and thus, the family of Jacob would have died in the coming famine!

Folks, we may look at a situation we are in now, the difficulties we face and wonder what God is doing, how unfair it is but we don't see the big picture, but God does! Rest in Him and you will rest in His peace! Also, during those times God is growing us, teaching us so that when it's time, He has prepared not only the work for us, but us for the work. That is what He did in the life of Joseph. These were not wasted years as some would think. For Joseph it will be 13 years of being a slave and being in prison before he is elevated to second in command over all of Egypt, behind only Pharaoh! He went from the pit to the pinnacle! As one person said, "Here Joseph is wronged again. He thought that butler's kindness might mean his release from prison, but it was not to be. God had another purpose. All men God uses greatly, He first prepares greatly. Few are willing to endure the greatness of God's preparation. God orders both our *steps* and *stops*." May we not forget that just as Joseph didn't! That is why even in the unfair situation he was in; he could serve the Lord faithfully. How about you?