

On the Beginning

37. Joseph's Faithfulness

NOTE ESPECIALLY Genesis 39-40

The last time we “saw” Joseph (at the end of Genesis 37), he had been sold to “*an officer of Pharaoh's*” in Egypt. He was a slave. God had given him dreams that said he would be a great man some day (Genesis 37:5-11), but so far he had dropped from being a rich man's son to being a bondsman. But Joseph kept his faith—and remained faithful, both to God and man.

1. **A Faithful Slave.**

But look at Joseph's career in servitude, (Genesis 39:1-6). Just as he had been faithful to his father, Joseph was a very faithful servant of Potiphar.

“And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.” (verse 2)

God blessed Joseph so much that his master saw the wisdom of making him steward of all he possessed. As a result, Potiphar's household was materially blessed. (Notice the parable of stewardship in Luke 19:11-26.)

2. **A Faithful Servant of God.**

Not only was Joseph faithful to his human master, but also he was faithful to his heavenly Master, the LORD. Read the story told in verses 7 through 20. In temptation, Joseph refused to yield and sin. But a lie sent him to prison anyway. His imprisonment presented him with another kind of temptation, a trial that would have pushed some men to give up on God!

3. **A Faithful Prisoner.**

The story of Joseph's imprisonment is remarkable. Read it, beginning at the end of Genesis 39.

“And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour 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.” (verses 20-23)

Just as he had been faithful to his father as a son, and just as he had been faithful to his master as a slave, Joseph was amazingly faithful and profitable as a prisoner to the keeper of the prison. And he stayed faithful to God and had God's blessing on his life. This is even more amazing when we think that imprisonment in Egypt like his had no term. In

other words, Joseph had no idea when or if he would get out! But he did his best to serve his boss and to please his Lord.

4. A New **Trial**.

Chapter 40 adds another hardship to Joseph's compounding trials. A man with a divine promise of greatness had his faith tried by slavery and then imprisonment. Slavery and imprisonment looked like steps *down* and not steps *up*. But Joseph stayed faithful and optimistic through these trials, probably encouraged by the memory of his childhood dreams. Then in prison there seemed to be a glimmer of hope. Two of the king's own servants were put in prison with Joseph, and he interpreted their dreams. He made only one request. To the butler he said,

"... think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:"
(verse 14)

Soon the butler was released and certainly Joseph hoped to be released. Instead the butler let him down.

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." (verse 23)

The first verse of Chapter 41 says it was another two long years before Joseph left the prison. These dark years were certainly years of sore inner trials as God seemed to lift Joseph up just to let him down. But God was faithful, and his servant was faithful to Him!