



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 39:1-6: Joseph Is Sold As a Slave to an Egyptian Official

"Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. 5 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. 6 Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance."

Background Notes

Genesis 38 is like a parenthesis in the Joseph story. The Joseph story began in Genesis 37. In Genesis 38 we have the account of Judah and his sin with Tamar; Judah's immoral action is in great contrast to the faithfulness of Joseph. In fact, the Holy Spirit included the story of Judah to highlight the faith of Joseph.

In Genesis 39 we resume the story of Joseph. The Ishmaelite traders sold Joseph to an Egyptian named Potiphar. Potiphar appears to have been a high-ranking official of the Pharaoh, because he was captain of the guard -- probably Pharaoh's personal bodyguards. That means that Potiphar would have had a large home and many servants.

Well, it wasn't long before Joseph's abilities, hard work, and integrity were noticed, and Potiphar elevated Joseph to be overseer of his entire household (v.4). This was quite a position! It meant that Joseph was over all the other servants. It meant that Joseph was the purchasing agent for the whole estate. It meant that Joseph made all the administrative decisions for the household. It would be similar to successfully running a small business today. And remember, Joseph may still have been a teenager, because he came down to Egypt when he was only seventeen years old (Genesis 37:2)!

Verse 6 tells us that Joseph was over everything except for the food that Potiphar ate. This may reflect the practice of the Egyptians not to eat with non-Egyptians. We read in Genesis 43:32, *"So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians."*

So perhaps that attitude is reflected here, but on the other hand, verse 6 may just be a figurative expression, meaning that Joseph was so capable that Potiphar didn't have to concern himself about anything except to show up for meals!

Doctrinal Points

1. God's plan for the believer's life will include unexpected blessings.

In verse 2 we read that the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man in the house of his Egyptian master. And the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake -- the blessing of the Lord was on all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So Joseph was blessed, and in turn the household of pagan Potiphar was blessed because of Joseph's presence in it!

Now these blessings were somewhat unexpected. If you had told Joseph when he was pleading with his brothers that he would be blessed in Egypt, and that he would be a blessing to the pagan Egyptians, that would have been hard for Joseph to believe! But the unexpected happened, and what was the key? The key is in verse 2, *"The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian."*

The Lord was with Joseph because Joseph was faithful to the Lord, and the Lord blessed Joseph and everything he touched. It was like the "Midas Touch." We could call it the "Joseph Touch" -- not gold, but blessing!

The same is true for the believer today. If you as a believer are faithful to the Lord as Joseph was, the Lord will be with you. You will be blessed, and others will be blessed as a result. No exceptions! Many of these blessings will be unexpected.

The blessing on your life will flow out even to unbelievers. You may be lying on a hospital bed, for example, and you don't expect to find blessing there, but you will! You will find the expected blessing of the Lord's close presence, and you may find the unexpected blessing of doctors, nurses and other patients being blessed by your testimony. You may lose a job, and find the unexpected blessing of other Christians helping you out, and an unexpected blessing of a non-Christian coming to faith because of the way you handled the situation. Being in a hospital or losing a job may not seem like a blessing, but if you are walking with the Lord and faithful Him, you will be blessed even in those kinds of situations. God's plan for the believer's life will include unexpected blessings.

Just this week I received a form letter from the ministry, "Answers in Genesis." For several months this ministry has been trying to get permission to build a "Creation Museum," but the county planning commission has turned them down because of their creationist position. This has been a great disappointment, and yet there have been unexpected blessings. They have had tremendous media coverage because of this, and as a result, many people have come to know about the "Answers in Genesis" ministry. They have gotten "free advertisement" in the press, and Christians have been united as a result. It was a great disappointment to have their plans for a creation museum turned down, but the story is not over yet. And even with this disappointment, they have seen unexpected blessings. God's plan for the believer's life will include unexpected blessings.

2. God's plan for the believer's life may include unexpected detours.

Do you remember Joseph's dreams about his brother's sheaves of grain bowing down to his sheaf, and the sun, moon, and stars bowing down to him? Joseph knew that these dreams were from God, and he knew that they would come true. And I wouldn't be surprised if Joseph now began to think how God was bring about the fulfillment of his dreams. After all, he was Potiphar's chief steward, and as Potiphar's chief steward, he could eventually be given his freedom (or so he might have thought). He may have imagined that he would continue to be very successful in Egyptian society. He would then travel back home to visit his father and brothers, and it would be obvious to them that he had become very successful. Joseph may have been thinking that this was how God would fulfill those prophetic dreams.

We can't be sure whether Joseph thought this way or not, but it would be a logical way to think. However, God was not working that way. Little did Joseph know that within a short time he would be in prison -- not for any wrong that he had done, but as a result for being faithful!

Joseph's life was about to take an unexpected and very unhappy detour. The good news is that Joseph did not give up on God. He appears to have realized that this was not a dead end, only a detour -- an unexpected detour, but only a detour. God's plan for the believer's life may include unexpected detours.

The apostle Paul had a number of unexpected detours in his life. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, Paul wrote, *"Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles"*(Romans 1:13).

Paul experienced an unexpected detour. Little did Paul realize that when he finally would get to Rome, it would be as a prisoner! But God had reasons for the detour. From that prison situation in Rome, Paul wrote four books of the Bible, now known as the "Prison Epistles."

Maybe you have had some unexpected detours lately. Maybe, like Joseph, you thought you finally saw how God was working things out in His plan for your life -- but suddenly everything changed, and you can't figure it out. Don't quit, and don't waver in your faith. Detours are not dead ends! God has his reason for the detours, as we'll see in Joseph's life. God's plan for the believer's life may include unexpected detours.

Practical Applications

1. If you are a Christian, you should be a better employee.

Joseph was a great employee. Joseph was only a slave, but he was honest, and industrious, and hard working. Any employer today would love to have Joseph as an employee.

The same should be true in our lives. If we are Christians, we should be better employees. There should never be any question as to our honesty, and integrity, and hard work. Joseph did not take extra-long coffee breaks, or "borrow" company property. If we

are faithful believers, God's blessing on our lives will spill over to our employer's life, just as it did with Joseph. If you are a Christian, you should be a better employee.

2. Use your blessings as a witness to unbelievers.

Verse 3, once again, *"And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand."*

"Wait a minute!" you may say. "I thought Potiphar was a pagan Egyptian worshipping Egyptian gods?" He was! Why, then, was he talking about the Lord? Well, take a guess! Obviously Joseph had been witnessing to Potiphar. No doubt Joseph used the Lord's blessings on his life as a witness to Potiphar.

We should do the same. If you are walking with the Lord, there will be blessing on your life, and unbelievers will notice. Now use that blessing as a witness.

The blessing of joy can be used as a witness. If you are walking with the Lord, you will have the joy of the Lord. Non-Christians will see that joy, and they will ask "How come you have a smile on your face?" "Why do you have that joy?" Well now, there is your opportunity! Don't just say, "I'm happy because my favorite NFL team is winning in the playoffs!" Use the comments of unbelievers as an opportunity to witness. Use your blessings as a witness to unbelievers.