



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 39:13-23: Joseph is Falsely Accused and Sent to Prison

"And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, 14 that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. 15 And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside."

16 So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. 17 Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; 18 so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."

19 So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused. 20 Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. 23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority,^[a] because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper."

Background Notes

Just when it looked like things were going well for Joseph, circumstances changed abruptly. Joseph was charged, not just with sexual harassment, but with rape. Potiphar's wife failed in her attempts to seduce faithful Joseph, and so she turned against him. In verse 19 we read that when Potiphar heard the story, his anger was aroused. With whom was Potiphar angry? With Joseph? Perhaps -- but maybe he was angry with his wife! Chances are this was not the first time Potiphar's wife had been unfaithful to her husband, and there is a very good indication here that Potiphar didn't believe her story. Do you see the indication in our text? It's that Potiphar didn't have Joseph killed instantly! Potiphar didn't have Joseph executed, but rather put him in prison. A slave raping the wife of a high-ranking Egyptian official would certainly have resulted in the death penalty, if Potiphar had actually thought that Joseph was guilty.

Joseph was put into the prison where the king's prisoners were confined (v20). This prison would have been a "cut above" some of your regular Egyptian prisons, but don't get the idea that it was plush, and that Joseph didn't suffer. Listen to what we read about Joseph's experience in Psalm 105:16-18: *"Moreover He called for a famine in the land;*

He destroyed all the provision of bread.

17 He sent a man before them—

Joseph—who was sold as a slave.

18 They hurt his feet with fetters,

He was laid in irons."

Joseph was shackled, and Genesis 40:15 tells us that he was in a dungeon: *"For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon."*

We can't be sure how long Joseph was in this situation, but it looks like it wasn't long before Joseph's positive attitude was noticed, and he was unshackled and put in charge of the other prisoners. But it was more than Joseph's positive attitude that brought about this change. *"But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison"*(v21). And in verse 23 we read, ***"The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority,^[a] because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper."***

God was working behind the scenes on Joseph's behalf, in spite of the unfortunate circumstances that had brought him into the prison. Let's move now to our doctrinal points about God's plan for the believer's life.

Doctrinal Points

1. God's plan for the believer's life may include false accusation.

Joseph was put in prison on a false accusation. He was totally innocent. He had been the perfect servant. He had not yielded to temptation in the slightest -- and yet he was falsely accused. His coat, the very evidence that proved that he had run away, was used against him.

How could God let this happen? God's plan for the believer's life may include false accusation. We know from the rest of the story that all of this was part of God's plan in order to bring Joseph to power. Can you imagine, however, how Joseph felt at this point? If you were Joseph, would you have blamed God?

Sometimes Christians are accused of wrongdoing, and it is not false accusation. Christians are not perfect. Sometimes they do wrong, and this hurts the testimony of Christ. Wrongdoing is certainly not God's will for our lives! However, sometimes our sovereign God allows a believer to be falsely accused, as Joseph was.

If this happens to you, don't blame God. Look to God for strength, as Joseph did. Thank Him for the opportunity to be tested! There is a great reward for being faithful in these situations. Listen to the words of 1 Peter 2:19-20: *"For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God."*

Have you ever been falsely accused? A Christian man I know is out of a job because he has been falsely accused. Not a shred of evidence, but yet he was fired a few weeks ago on the basis of the false accusation of one person. We discussed the story of Joseph together, and I was able to show him that even this situation can be part of God's plan for his life.

God's plans for the believer may include false accusation, but it is hard to take when you are going through it! However, we can look to the experience of our Lord as the perfect example. As the perfect Servant, He was falsely accused, but He recognized that it was all part of God's plan. Our attitude and reaction should be the same as our Lord's attitude and reaction.

Listen again to the words of 1 Peter 2:19-23: "*For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 " Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth," 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.*"

Joseph certainly pictures our Lord here, doesn't he? Falsely accused! Suffering innocently! Not opening his mouth, as we read of our Lord in Isaiah 53:7, "*He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.*"

Joseph is a beautiful picture of our Lord here. Our first teaching point should help us to follow our Lord's example. God's plan for the believer's life may include false accusation.

2. God's plan for the believer's life will include preparation for the future.

Why would God allow Joseph to be falsely accused, thrown into prison, and suffer unjustly? We know this was part of God's plan, but why? There are many reasons: a test of faith, a test of character, learning humility and patience, and certainly preparation for the future.

Joseph was being groomed and prepared to be the prime minister of Egypt. Joseph needed some training in the affairs of Egypt, and knowledge of the inner politics of Egypt. Remember that Joseph was a Hebrew shepherd from Canaan! Before he became prime minister of Egypt, he would have to learn the ways of Egyptian culture and society. He had already learned much by managing Potiphar's estate, and now he would learn much more in the royal prison.

You can imagine how much Joseph learned about Egyptian culture and the workings of the government of Egypt just by listening to and talking with the prisoners in Pharaoh's prison. Many of these prisoners would have been former high-ranking officials. In addition, Joseph was becoming more sensitive to the injustices of Egyptian society, something that is essential for a good leader, both then and today. And then think of the time alone with God that Joseph had in prison! This was all part of God's preparation for the future. Joseph's experiences, even in prison, were all part of the preparation for his future.

God's plan for the believer's life will include preparation for the future. We see this principle in the lives of so many biblical characters, don't we? Moses! David! Paul! And many more! As we read of their lives, we see how the events of their early years were all preparation for the future.

This is true in our lives as well. Whatever experiences you are going through right now, pleasant or unpleasant, they are training and preparation for God's future plans for your life. That is the way God has designed it – and this goes for all of us, at all ages, by the way! God's plan for the believer's life will include preparation for the future.

Practical Applications

1. Don't jump to the conclusion that God is disciplining a Christian who is suffering.

That is a terrible mistake to make. I'm sure if the Joseph story were happening today, there would be some Christians who would say, "Joseph must have done something wrong! Otherwise, why would he be thrown into prison, and why would he be suffering?" But these people would be 100% wrong in their conclusions. Joseph was not being disciplined for wrongdoing. He was being tested, but he was not being disciplined for wrongdoing.

It's true that God can use suffering to discipline wayward Christians, but don't jump to the conclusion that God is disciplining a Christian who is suffering!

2. Let's be extremely careful, because of false accusations.

We have seen that false accusations can be part of God's plan, but that doesn't mean that we try to get ourselves "falsely accused." In fact, we should be extremely careful because of the possibility that unbelievers will falsely accuse us. The enemy is always looking for opportunities to bring a false accusation against a believer. Those of us who are employees -- be extremely careful about using company time or property for personal use, even though it may be acceptable practice where you work. Why? Because somewhere along the line, you may be accused of stealing company time or company property! Christians must be extra-careful not to do anything that would give opportunity for accusations.

Billy Graham had a policy that is a good example of this principle. He had a strict policy to never ride alone in a vehicle with a woman other than his wife -- simply because of the possibility of false accusation.

Let's be careful to guard against false accusations!