

Subject: Joseph's Turmoil

Reading: Genesis 39:1-23

Last week we saw how Joseph was in a situation of temptation, as Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. We noted this was a real temptation and we saw Joseph triumphing in the situation and not only overcoming the temptation, but resisting it and avoiding its source and eventually when Potiphar's wife seeks to seduce him, he, by his swiftness, eludes her grasp and runs.

Joseph did not fear to disobey his master's wife in this particular matter because he desired a clean and pure conscience before God, rather than the satisfaction of temporal desires. Many may wonder at such virtue. Many may envy it for their own lives; sadly, many would laugh at it and mock Joseph for being a "goody-goody". I suspect if Joseph was alive in our day and age that many would mock him and taunt him with cruel taunts as to his sexuality, his manliness. Yet Joseph did what was right - not only with regard to Potiphar and his wife, but also to God. If no one else knew he had done wrong, God would have, so he says to Potiphar's wife *"How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"* (v 9).

Such a one should be praised. Even as he ran away from Potiphar's wife, his actions should have shown the seriousness of such immorality to Potiphar's wife; but it does not. She had been spurned too much. The love, rather her lust, had been disappointed and frustrated, she had been mocked and denied again and her sinful desires cannot bear it. The one who only a short time before could not endure him out of her sight and thoughts, she now cannot endure in her sight. Her love is turned to hatred, her desires to revenge. If she cannot have his body, she will have it destroyed!

Joseph had done the right thing and had triumphed in the situation of temptation, but we are going to see **The Situation of Turmoil** it brought him into. I want to consider this using three headings:

1. The Treachery of Potiphar's Wife.

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" so the saying goes – more fully *"Heav'n has no Rage, like Love to Hatred turn'd, Nor Hell a Fury, like a Woman scorn'd,"* from William Congreve, in *The mourning bride*, 1697, but it has no scriptural basis - for hell is the most awful place, but shows us the bitterness and pain of a person's anger and in this case revenge. Here was Potiphar's wife and she had in hand a garment of Joseph - a cloak (NIV), or possibly his loincloth - for a cloak or outer garment would have proved nothing, but such as a loincloth would substantiate the accusation. She had not been only provocative, suggestive, but positively indecent in her action and Joseph had fled.

Now filled with bitter, vengeful thoughts, but his garment provided her with the evidence/goods to get even with him and she plays the part totally. Here she is, the mistress of the house, and she now calls the servants in (v 13-15). Possibly she would not normally have bothered with them, but she gives them the poison they may have wanted against Joseph! If her case was watertight, why call in the servants - she was an officer's wife and may not have usually passed the time of day with the servants; but now she needs their backup and support to strengthen her case. It is possible they were jealous of Joseph; they may have had their sidelines and "perks" curtailed because of him and his honesty.

Potiphar's wife is brash in her lies and even condemns and blames her husband *"See, **he** has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us."* (v14 NKJV) - she stoops low and slanders her husband before his servants. She makes much ado; she has to inform the whole

household and as queen Gertrude in Hamlet says "*The Lady doth protest too much, methinks.*"

She lied in abundance about Joseph. It sprang from rage and fury, but then a guilty conscience ensured it had to be sustained else she would be exposed. She plots the destruction of Joseph because he was a man of virtue! This must have caused him turmoil in his heart and life.

When Potiphar came home, it was the last thing he would have expected or wanted and she told him how Joseph tried to rape her! The story becomes more pointed as she blames Potiphar for bringing him in, elevating him to a position of authority. She reminds him that he was not an Egyptian, but Hebrew, a slave and then she says he tried to rape her, but she resisted and he ran away. Potiphar's reaction to this was that he was angry "*he burned with anger*" (v19). The evidence was there, his wife's story was there. Joseph was for the chop, the high jump.

We have to see here that Potiphar's wife's treachery is just the out working of not just bitter resentment, but sin. Adam and Eve were perfect in Eden and they fell into sin - falling short of God standards and requirements. It seemed such a little thing, but they were involved in a cover-up job, hide the truth situation, a pass the buck and blame situation - all out of self-preservation.

Sin is not committed in isolation; it is not without side-effects in our own or other people's lives. It is an offence to God. Many are aware that their lives are not right, but they try to cover them up and pretend it is not the case with them. It can result in fears, phobias, anxieties, neuroses, depression, relationship problems. Why? Because they ignore what God's word which says "*He who*

conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

David covered up his adultery with lies, deception, murder and hypocrisy. Only when he confessed was he aware of the joy of his salvation again, then he ceased have burning bones day and night, was he at peace (Psalm 32). There may be something small or great in our lives that is eating us up and it is unconfessed sin - cherished sin, a habit, a thought pattern, a hurt or wrong carried or a bitter or harsh attitude, pride or hypocrisy. We cannot prosper until it is confessed and forsaken.

Perhaps you know you are not right with God. You've heard the gospel and it angers you that you have to admit that you're a sinner, that you can't do anything to save yourself. This is a sin as it is pride in self, pride in your own ability and goodness, it is wilful rebellion against God. This needs to be confessed and forsaken.

Potiphar's wife was now a treacherous woman and against Joseph. She had influenced by her treacherous deception both her husband Potiphar and all the household servants and so we move on and see:

2. The Trial of Joseph.

Can we really call it a trial? Potiphar is angry and he throws Joseph into prison. No defence no chance to defend himself, no opportunity to say "*Hold on a minute...*" No. Joseph is just imprisoned.

We know Joseph was innocent. We also know that things did work out, but Joseph didn't. He must be in a real turmoil at this mockery of the trial. He was cast into prison where the king's prisoners were kept. We are told from Psalm 105:18 that "*They*

bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons," Captain Potiphar was a man of authority and if he put in the prison someone for attempting to rape his wife, Joseph was going to be imprisoned and suffer!

It's strange if we pause to consider this incident, it's a wonder that Potiphar does not simply kill Joseph for this offence; this alleged attempted rape of his wife. I agree here with many of the commentators that Potiphar is doing a cover up job to save his wife's reputation and therefore his own! He knew Joseph - not only his work, but his own personal standards and beliefs. He also knew his wife... Potiphar was a man who needed to be able to read and know people and one look at Joseph's face would have told him all he needed to know. Yet he also knew that he couldn't lose face before the servants and they would have spread it around and soon he would have been the laughing stock of the area.

Even if Joseph had protested his innocence who would believe that a young man could exercise such self-control and virtue in the midst of a corrupt generation? I also feel that Joseph was silent at this time. His love and respect for Potiphar was such that he would not destroy the marriage and even though Joseph suffered for doing right and good, he did so willingly.

In this Joseph is a picture of Christ and points us on to the full realisation of this in the Saviour. We find that the Lord Jesus was perfect, He did nothing wrong, did only good, taught wondrous things, did wonders and miracles that no one else could or has ever done. Yet for this He was taken and put to a mockery of a trial where the verdict had been reached even before the prisoner was captured. There were false accusations made, lies, slander, false witnesses were brought and even their stories didn't tie together. He suffered in silence, not defending himself. He was

condemned, executed, imprisoned in a grave and He was the Innocent One, the Perfect and Pure Holy One.

Joseph suffered too - unknown to him God was working out His purposes in his life to preserve His people in the years, centuries to come. Jesus suffered such, but knew why He did so. It was for His people, those He would draw to Himself throughout the ages. That is why I can commend the Lord Jesus to be your Saviour; He is able to save you because of all He accomplished in His life and death. He accomplished a perfect righteousness that He will give us, He paid the guilt and debt of sin we owe to God. Would you be free from the chains, shackles of sin and its prison? Then the One to rescue you is the Lord Jesus - He was weighed down by sin, but He overcame it, destroyed it and offers us freedom from its guilt, power and condemnation. *"If the Son shall set you free you shall be free indeed"*.

Yet Joseph wasn't free. He spent some time in prison - 3 years as a minimum. So, let's see:

3. The Treatment of Joseph.

Joseph's initial treatment was that of hardship - chained and shackled and an iron on his neck. He suffered and it really hurt. All his hopes, his dreams were well and truly smashed. He'd never rise to any prominence, never get to see his family again. He'd landed on his feet in Potiphar's house... Perhaps he felt he'd been lucky, fortunate! Joseph had to learn this in person that it was not the case. He had to learn that it was because of the Lord and His blessing that he had prospered and been successful.

Now here in the prison, the whole thing was being underlined - *"the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warder."* (v 21). Prison was

the last place in which any success or kindness could be expected, but we read of Joseph finding favour in the eyes of the prison warden. No doubt Potiphar's anger had abated and the jailer was given leave to do this act of kindness, but the ultimate source was God - even the heart of a hardened jailer is in God's hands and when God wants to, there can be love and kindness shown through these e.g. Paul and Silas having wounds washed and then fed by the Philippian jailer.

We have to realise that if we are God's children, He is with us wherever we are and whatever we go through. We may go through difficult times, times of chastising, when it seems God is getting even with us for our sin or even punishing us, but God doesn't get even, doesn't pay us what we deserve. Calvary was the place where God's justice was satisfied, where the payment for what we deserve was paid fully. God often chastens, disciplines us because He loves us. Such chastening, discipline is not punishment, but preparation - it is for our profit, benefit, so that we may be partakers of His holiness. Hebrews 12:6 says *"because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."* God does this to **every** son, to **every** child of His. In some it is more than others, some less in His sovereign wisdom. It may seem as if God is contrary to us, but He does it, He allows it **because** He loves us and wants us to be more Christ-like and holy.

God could remove all our problems; release us from all our trials instantly. He could have with Joseph, but, as with Joseph, God has more in mind for us than ease and vindication. Joseph was to be used in a glorious way and the prison experience was to finally shape Joseph for service. Our present trials will be shaping us for future usefulness in God's service to Him and to His people. Who knows what God can do with us if we take our trials, our mistreatments with dignity and grace and show Christian graces?

God knows what we can bear. He doesn't allow things to occur in our lives that are useless or a waste of time; He has a purpose for us and works in us in individual ways as He knows is best.

God may place us in situations where we would rather not be. Ask Joseph - he would not want to be in prison, meeting the prison warden, yet God used that situation and experience for his dramatic promotion to Prime Minister of Egypt.

God was shaping and preparing Joseph of future use and Joseph had been chipped, knocked, shaped and would continue to be so worked on, but at all times God was in control and intended it for good. May we have faith in our God of all grace and trust Him in all the way He leads us, to work for His glory and for His honour wherever He would have us to be.