

**Reading:** Genesis 41:41-57

**Theme:** Some Things Joseph Enjoyed

Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens is probably well known by us - about Scrooge, his change of behaviour and attitude by the dealings of the spirits of Christmas past, present and future, on one Christmas Eve have thrilled generations of readers. After his experiences are over, Scrooge gets out of bed and calls to a boy in the street *"What's to-day?"* *"Why Christmas Day Sir"* is the reply. Scrooge exclaims *"The spirits did it in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can."* Scrooge was transformed in just one night. I wonder if Joseph would have liked it if he had been a changed man overnight - from an indulged, even spoilt teenager in his father's house, to ruler of Egypt. It was not the case, for the process took 13 long years of suffering, shaping and preparation. It was not God that was slow, but Joseph was slow to learn and God dealt gently and steadily with him.

All of us feel we are teachable, we want God's will, but are we really like that? Just consider if God takes us in a way we do not want to go; takes things around us in a way we do not want, are we still willing then? All of us learn or should learn of God as time goes on. He may have to chastise us, discipline us, test us, try us and so show us how we are developing and expose our weaknesses. Jonah was God's servant, a prophet, and he would do whatever God wanted - until he was sent to Nineveh and he didn't want to go - not out of fear, but because he knew God would show them mercy and kindness!

God often does more works in us than we realise - when He does not let us have our own way. He did this in Joseph's life e.g. the cupbearer forgetting him. We can readily overestimate the satisfaction we'd get if we had our own way in things. The prodigal son did - wanted his inheritance and off he went to enjoy life to the full. The grass seemed greener on the other side and he ended up learning the hard way that this was not so. Perhaps some of us here

have experienced this. Joseph did not know what God had in mind for him as he went through 13 years of hardship, maybe despairing of life as he was alone and suffering. It was not his fault - he had not been stupid, he had behaved himself impeccably towards Potiphar's wife and yet he still suffered!

We may have suffered in our lives and events have happened and left us with a feeling of "*Why bother, what's left in life?*" It may have left us feeling insecure, very low, disheartened even. Perhaps we have said we would never trust anybody again. Joseph could have felt like this so easily, but God had something mind-blowing in store for Joseph. We have been looking at this and last week we saw Pharaoh honouring Joseph, acknowledging Joseph's God, his vindication and promotion of Joseph, and Pharaoh presenting Joseph as royal. This evening I want us to note 4 things which Joseph enjoyed:

### **1. Authority.**

Here was Joseph a foreigner, a slave, a prisoner, now at the young age of 30 and promoted to be ruler over all Egypt. Yes, people might say that he was wise and gifted, did he not he need experience; did not he need to develop? Pharaoh removes any doubt concerning Joseph's authority by his declaration. Where the word of the king is, there is power. Here was Pharaoh, king of Egypt, having divine status to the Egyptians and he appoints Joseph and gives him this authority in the smallest and greatest of matters. If anyone resisted Joseph, they were resisting Pharaoh himself. They may have resented this foreign slave in power, but they did not go against him, else it would be treason against Pharaoh himself. A rebel against the king at that time was worthy of death and Pharaoh's authority was in and upon Joseph.

The authority Joseph had in Egypt points us on to and pictures the Lord Jesus Christ for us. He was once "*gentle Jesus meek and mild*", He was once as a servant, a Son of man, a suffering Saviour who

became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. But He is not so **now**. He has been highly exalted and given a name above all names and at His name everyone will one day bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He now has complete authority in both heaven and on earth.

Many listening have bowed the knee already and have confessed that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Saviour, as the One who has the rule in their lives. Have you? If you do or will not, then one day you will confess Him as the Lord of all Creation, of the universe and you will bow the knee to Him then as your Sovereign and your Judge. Everyone will bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord - whether willingly with joy, or reluctantly with horror, but all will bow the knee and confess such. Today we can bow the knee to Him as did the wise men and give gifts to the Saviour. Isn't it quite amazing that He wants our sin stained and marred life given to Him and in return He will cleanse it and give us in exchange a brand-new life in Him. We cannot be full of pride for we are to realise we can't save ourselves, but we need to come and make peace with the Son. Psalm 2:12 says *"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."*

Have we seen the authority Jesus has even now? He is the one who holds this world together; He is the One that has our next breath and heartbeat under His control. We are to realise God demands that everyone honours the Son, yet so many ignore His commands and despise God's word of authority. If disobeying a king was foolish and treason, what foolishness, treason it is to disobey God? What are you doing this night regarding God and His Son the Lord Jesus? See that Joseph also enjoyed:

## **2. Matrimony.** (v45)

There are two main changes which occurred to Joseph that are brought about in this matrimonial enjoyment:

**Firstly**, Pharaoh went ahead and arranged Joseph's marriage! Joseph was to be a great and honourable man and Pharaoh no doubt gave him a wife who would be a credit and an honour to him.

**Secondly**, Pharaoh changes Joseph's name before he marries - to Zaphenath-Paneah. Joseph was a man in touch with God and his new name means from the Hebrew "*a revealer of secrets*" or if it is based on Egyptian it means "*the deliverer of the world*". Whatever his name means it is a good name. I prefer the second translation of his name, but both are true of him because he did reveal secrets and he delivered the then known world from death and destruction in the time of famine. He was greatly honoured for it and his name and its meaning was honoured for centuries until a king came to power who knew not Joseph - but that is to that king's shame and moves us on 400 years to the narrative recorded for us at the start of the book of Exodus.

How many are ignorant of the true Saviour of the world, perhaps even someone listening now? People do not realise the wonder of God so loving the world that He sent His One and only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. People do not realise the wonder of the joy of sins forgiven and peace with God by having this Saviour as their own Saviour.

Joseph was the deliverer of the world, the revealer of secrets, but he also had Asenath as his wife. This was a blessing of God. He was a stranger in Egypt, but he had a wife provided for him. He is now in one sense at home. Not his father's home, but his own home. Men and women were created as social creatures and especially for the companionship of one special person - a husband or wife, to fulfil us and complete us as people.

Joseph was honoured having her as his wife, yet it was more of a blessing to her. She would have been brought up in the religion of Egypt, especially as her father was Priest of On (*that could be read*

*the Prince of On (On is Heliopolis))* and yet she's married to one who could speak to her of the living God. I have no doubt that Joseph acknowledged God in his marriage as he did in all the other areas of his life. Even the naming of their children reflects this. It was Asenath's privilege to have such a husband. See he also enjoyed:

### **3. Prosperity.** (v 48-50)

Joseph was diligent in his work, had been promoted to the nation's Prime Minister for their good and would save many lives in Egypt. He went out to see what would be involved in this work. All the management skills he had learned in Potiphar's house and the prison, are now brought into play as he began to plan and prepare for the handling of a vast amount of grain. It could have been so tempting, after all the hard times, to take things easy, but not Joseph. If the kindness of Potiphar was one of the reasons he gave to Potiphar's wife not to commit adultery, then now having had a greater kindness and favour from Pharaoh, it spurred him on to greater faithfulness and diligence in his work of securing the country against the foretold famine.

Joseph saw the prosperity of the harvests as they came, so he gathered up a 5<sup>th</sup> of the harvests and the surpluses too. He knew human nature that people would indulge themselves and not save. He began keeping records, but gave that up as a thankless job as he would have needed many computers as so much was being brought in. Joseph knew prosperity on his works, but also there was prosperity upon his words, his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream - all were seeing what he had said of the years of prosperity was clear and true.

Joseph also knew personal prosperity as two sons were born to him and Asenath. Even as he named them, he was acknowledging God's goodness to him: **Manasseh** = God made him forget all his toil and suffering and the sorrow of his father's household and the sorrow of being parted from it. He, every time he called his son was reminded

not so much of his past sufferings, but reminded of God's good blessing lavished on him and he had so much to be thankful for. **Ephraim** = fruitful, as he acknowledges that God had made him fruitful, so once again shows that his success was due to God's goodness.

Many people have 'Manasseh' and 'Ephraim' in their lives and have many reasons to thank God and to appreciate His goodness. Sadly, they can become fruitful **and forget God**. We need to remember Him, acknowledge Him in our lives and to see how He has blessed us, so we count our blessings and use that to look expectantly for Him to continue to bless us - even if at present we seem to be in a land of affliction - because our God can bring good out of, what may seem to us, dark and oppressive circumstances times. We see that Joseph was blessed with a time of prosperity for Egypt, in his own personal life and we see that when the famine struck, they all enjoyed:

#### **4. Sufficiency.**

The **first thing** that was found sufficient was God's word spoken by Joseph (v 54). There were 7 years of plenty and then the 7 years of famine started. The word spoken was shown to be up to the test, it was sufficient. During the 7 years of prosperity, when felt they'd never had it so good, people could have been wondering were Joseph's words true; isn't this the dawn of the modern farming methods... then the drought, famine, the crop failures all came along in all the detail they had been told by God's word through Joseph.

Many in our day doubt God's word is true and reliable. Sadly, many in churches say that too. We have to say it is true, reliable, inerrant, inspired by God. We need to proclaim the promises of God are true as to His blessings, as to the way of life He wants for men and women. We need to say His threatenings are also true and He is a holy and a just God who will punish men and women who have neglected or rejected to make peace with Him through the Lord Jesus

and that punishment is not just for a little while and then He will let them free, but is for eternity in a real place called hell.

He has warned those who live lives contrary to God's word will not prosper. Backsliders will not prosper either and yet He graciously promises to restore to Himself all who will return to Him, to restore the years the locusts have devoured, to heal them freely of their backsliding. The promises of salvation, the promises of restoration and the warnings of damnation are all true and will be fulfilled. God's word has always been found to be sufficient. God calls on us to prove Him. He delights in us finding His word is reliable and trustworthy as we go out in faith upon it. He has bound himself to His word.

There was **secondly** a sufficiency of food in Egypt (v 54b). The reason for this is because action had been taken based on God's word. It was not just "*Yes I believe that*", but there was a doing of it. We need to obey God's word in its commands and demands. This is especially so regarding trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. People have felt empty, lost, discontented within themselves and this may be aggravated because they know what God wants of them, yet they refuse to obey His word. They feel that they are good enough and can sort out their own lives on their own.

The Egyptians might have had much stored up in their own homes and barns, but there came a point where their own resources ran out and at that point they found that there was enough stored up by Joseph to provide for their needs. In our lives it is not wrong to provide for and to think about the future - we must make a right preparation for pensions, insurances etc. Many people do this but do it in a wrong way. They act as if they are immortal and will live forever and make no provision for eternity. They've a right concern for the here and now and the near future but have little or no thoughts about eternity. What are we concerned about? We are to be wise and provide physically for our future needs and we are instructed to

do so by considering the ant, but above all else we are to be treasure seekers – laying up treasure in heaven and seeking to add to it and having our hearts there at all times.

There was sufficiency for the Egyptians, but not only them, as the **third** area of sufficiency was for all the countries round about. The years of plenty no doubt had touched them also. They too had never had it so good and then the famine hit in a big way. They had no provision made or laid up by a Joseph and they struggled. We can imagine the amazing news coming through to them of food in Egypt and many went there, found it true and bought food.

There is an all-sufficiency in the Lord Jesus Christ that all can come to. He said that whoever went to Him as their Saviour would never be cast out or turned away. There is no one so bad that they cannot be forgiven, there is no one so good that they do not need forgiveness. We must all go to Him to receive the ‘free gift’ of forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Whoever goes to Him as their Saviour will find His grace and mercy is more than sufficient for them.

If any of the Egyptians or any from other lands ignored Joseph and the provision he made, then they would have perished in the famine. If anyone ignores the Lord Jesus and God's provision in and through Him, then they will perish eternally. My prayer is that no one who hears this message will perish, but will see their need to trust the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour and that they find with amazed delight that everything they need has been provided and accomplished by One far greater than Joseph – the Lord Jesus Himself.