**God’s Smile Upon His Faithful**

**Genesis 39 (ESV)**

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We’re going to look at Genesis 39. We started last week in Genesis 37 to unfold the life of Joseph. Our series is subtitled *Broken World, But Unbroken Promise*. We’re going to see over and over again that this world breaks, but God’s promises don’t. God’s promise remains whole and intact now and forever. So we’re going to read Genesis 39. You remember from last week, Joseph goes to see his brothers in a shepherd’s area near Dothan. When they see him, they hate him. They devise evil against him. They ultimately sell him into slavery to some Ishmaelites who are passing on their way through Israel, down to Egypt. So let’s read Genesis 39.

***1*** *Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.* ***2*** *The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.* ***3*** *His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.* ***4*** *So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.* ***5*** *From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field.* ***6*** *So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.*

*Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.* ***7*** *And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, “Lie with me.”* ***8*** *But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge.* ***9*** *He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”* ***10*** *And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.*

***11*** *But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house,* ***12*** *she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.* ***13*** *And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house,* ***14*** *she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came into me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.* ***15*** *And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.”* ***16*** *Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home,* ***17*** *and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me.* ***18*** *But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.”*

***19*** *As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, “This is the way your servant treated me,” his anger was kindled.* ***20*** *And Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.* ***21*** *But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.* ***22*** *And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it.* ***23*** *The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph’s charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.*

May God encourage us through His Word!

A 2,000 year old Chinese parable intersects with a 4,000 year old Hebrew story. The story is here in Genesis 39. The parable begins with a farmer who has a neighbor come over and visit him in the morning. The neighbor asks him, “How are you doing?” The farmer has a downcast face. He said, “Well, my horse died today and I can’t afford to buy another one.” The neighbor says, “Well, that’s really bad.”

The next morning, the neighbor came over and said, “How are you doing?” This time the farmer has a really happy face. He said, “My uncle gave me a horse and it’s twice as strong as my old horse.” The neighbor said, “That’s really, really good!”

The next morning, the neighbor goes over and asks the farmer, “How are you doing today?” This time the farmer’s face is really, really sad. He said, “Well, my new horse ran away and I think it’s gone forever.” The neighbor said, “That’s really, really bad.”

The next day, the neighbor asked the farmer, “How are you doing?” The farmer was happy and he said, “It’s amazing! The horse came back. Not only did it come back, but he brought another horse with him.” The neighbor said, “That’s really, really good.”

The next day, the neighbor said, “How are you doing?” This time the farmer has a really sad face. He said, “I let my son try to break the new horse and he got thrown. My son broke his leg. He’s in pain and he’s not going to be able to work all season.” The neighbor said, “That’s really, really bad.”

The next day, the neighbor came over and said, “How are you doing?” This time the farmer has a really happy face. He said, “Well, today the emperor’s men came. They’re conscripting all young men into the army because there is going to be a big war. But they didn’t take my son because his leg was broken.” The neighbor said, “That’s really, really good.”

You can imagine that the parable could go on and on. On a secular level, this parable is meant to teach that there are good things and bad things that happen in life. Life is not perfect, so we have to patiently endure the bad in the belief that somehow the bad will become the good. This Chinese parable sort of exemplifies a very popular phrase. I’ve heard so many people say, “I believe everything happens for a reason.” Have you ever heard anybody say that? Most mean by that statement that the bad things that come our way will lead to something good that will happen in our life.

There is much truth in this worldly parable and this worldly saying. For instance, yes, our life does have meaning. The things that happen to us are meaningful. There is purpose. Yes, it’s futile to just simply focus on the bad that comes our way in life and just sort of get depressed by it or despair over it. But this phrase “everything happens for a reason” falls way short of the brilliance of the Gospel. First, this little phrase completely leaves God out of the picture. God’sinvisible hand working in the details of this world remains unacknowledged. Scripture teaches us that the only reason that anything happens for a good purpose is that God ordains all things to happen for good purposes.

Secondly, this saying gives hope to people who really have no hope because they don’t have God. Not everyone can say everything happens for a good reason in life. Scripture teaches us that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him, for those who are connected to Him by faith. Only those connected to God through Jesus can have confidence that every bad thing we experience will actually produce something good because God is working behind the scenes to make that so.

Finally, this worldly saying neglects the truth that God defines “good” in view of eternity and not in terms of just this temporal world. Scripture teaches us that the good that God pursues is His eternal glory. The good that God pursues is this eternal transformation of His people into the image of His very own Son, Jesus. If we don’t cherish God’s eternal purposes for our life, then we cannot claim comfort from a saying like that. Bad things happen to those who love God with the purpose that God is ordaining them to shape them for His eternal purpose, which will ultimately bring us joy.

What a comfort Joseph’s story brings. Joseph reminds us that God indeed is on the throne. There are all these actors. There are these angry, hostile brothers. There is this Egyptian officer named Potiphar and his seductress of a wife, Mrs. Potiphar, who then becomes really bitter toward Joseph and brings really harsh things down upon him. There is a jailer. Ultimately, there is going to be a Pharaoh. All these actors are on the stage, but in the center of the stage, God holds His place. He is moving all the other players. He is directing. He is producing a story that is much more grand and glorious than the stories that these individual lives want to tell on their own.

Joseph’s story reminds us that God’s picture is so much bigger and more infinite than mine. God is looking well past into the eternal future, while I often am just consumed with this brief little snapshot of time called now. This is what I’m seeing. This is what my focus is. God doesn’t focus upon the snapshot. He focuses upon how that snapshot fits into the big picture. I find myself oftentimes consumed with the temporal, with the superficial. God never does that. He is consumed with the eternal, with the vital.

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, we are right to expect really, really hard things to happen in our life. God doesn’t promise that hard things won’t happen to us. But we as children of God don’t grow discouraged because of them. We’re able to see our world through the eyes of faith. Our eyes of faith connect us to God and His perspective. Here’s what Paul writes in

**2 Corinthians 4:16** So we do not lose heart.

Paul experienced some amazing hardships as a result of following Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Transient means those things are passing away. They’re temporal. Things that are eternal are fixed. They’re sound. Joseph’s story teaches us the beauty of Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians. So let’s open our Bibles to Genesis 39. The main idea that we’re going to trace through this chapter is that ifthe Lord is with us, every loss is gain. Yet, if the Lord is not with us, every gain is loss. Everything we think is fantastic for our life actually becomes a loss because it moves us further away from God and His eternal plan. So above all, center in life is the truth that we need the Lord, Yahweh, to be with us. If you’re taking notes, we’re first going to look at

**The Adversity of the Faithful**

***1*** *Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.* ***2*** *The LORD was with Joseph,*

This is a real story in a real place. Here is a map of the real place. This is Canaan at that time. Way up in the north is where Joseph’s family began. Then Joseph is going to come across the Jordan River and he is going to meet his brothers in an area called Dothan, which is a place where sheep are able to graze.



When Joseph meets them, if you remember the story, they hate him with a bitter hatred. He is just simply there to say, “Hey, brothers! I’m here to help you. What can I do?” He expects them to say, “Hey, good to see you, Joseph.” But as soon as he arrives in the camp, he sees their faces just filled with murderous wrath. They grab him and they throw him into a pit. He hears them talking about how they will kill him and he is pleading with them. We don’t know how he is pleading, but Scripture tells us he is pleading with them. “Don’t do this! You’re my brothers. I love you.” You can imagine what a young brother might say in pleading and trying to reason and trying to waken the conscience, trying to waken some bit of affection. His brothers just became harder and colder. They refused to listen to his pleas. Ultimately, the plan to kill him was changed to a plan to sell him to Ishmaelite slave traders, so that’s what they did. The Ishmaelites were going down to Egypt, southwest. That is a 250 mile trek from Dothan to Egypt. For 250 miles he is in chains. He is seventeen years old. At seventeen, he is experiencing the kind of hardship that few one hundred year old people face in their entire lives.

As a seventeen year old, you can imagine some of the emotions that are rolling through his soul. Joseph gets to Egypt and everybody is speaking a language he doesn’t understand. They’re bowing down to these foreign gods that are all over the place. All the while, I believe Joseph is thinking about the Lord, Yahweh. We’ll see why in a moment. Joseph is handsome. He’s strong. So right away, one of the best of the best purchases him. He wants to purchase the best of slaves. So Potiphar, captain of the Egyptian guard, purchases Joseph. The text tells us the LORD was with Joseph. In the midst of all this, God had not forgotten Joseph. God had not forsaken Joseph. God’s good hand remained on Joseph. Joseph is one of those faithful ones in whom God delights.

God’s smile sometimes looks like a frown. Undoubtedly, Joseph had to have emotionally asked the question, “God, what did I do wrong? What’s going on here? My life is just turned upside down. I had a family. I was happy. I was going to help them and now I’m a slave. I don’t think I’ll ever, ever, ever see my family ever again. That old life is gone. God, what happened?” Here’s the truth. For those who love God, nothing in life stands outside of His all-wise, all-good, all-loving plan for His glory and for our good. Though sometimes God’s smile looks like a frown, it nonetheless is a smile.

I want you to notice that through all of this, Joseph doesn’t sin by accusing God of wrongdoing. We find no record of Joseph grumbling against God and complaining against Him. We don’t even find him even reviling against his brothers. He’s not murmuring, “Those dirty, rotten so-and-so’s” the whole way down. Instead, throughout this time of intense testing, Joseph keeps his faith in Yahweh. He fixes his eyes upon the faithful God who made a promise to his family. God made a covenant promise that was unconditional. It is by faith that he knows that God is good, that God loves him, that God is personal.

One day our faith will be sight. Right now, we receive this by faith as a result of who we know God to be, as a result of what we know of what God has done and His love for us. One day, our faith will become sight. That’s the day we see Jesus face to face and we become like Him. All the wrongs will be righted. All the sins and all the evil that takes place is gone. It is defeated. Death itself is defeated. When we stand before God, do you know what question we will not ask God? Do you know what question that we won’t even think about on that day? It’s a question that often just rolls through our hearts right now and consumes us. It’s the question, “Why Lord? Why did you have me go through this?” That question will not be in our hearts. Why is that? It’s because we will see as God sees. We will see the eternal picture. We will see the beauty and wonder of God. We’ll see how God put an end to sin as a result of walking us through so much of our difficult life, some through our failings and some through the failings of others. Instead our hearts will say, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Worthy to receive wisdom and power and glory and might!”

Friends, I don’t know what is happening in your life right now. Many of you undoubtedly are being pressed by some hardships and persecutions and troubles of various kinds. In the midst of these times, we must retreat to what we know to be true not on the basis of the eyes that can see our world, but on the basis of the eyes that can see God through His Word, by His Spirit. Here’s what Paul wrote in Romans 8.

**Romans 8:28-29** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,

There is going to be a day when we see Jesus and we’re going to be made like Him in His glorious majesty and His beauty. We’re not going to have His complete perfection, but we’re going to be like Him. We’re going to be changed in some way so that our lives actually reflect His glorious person. God is working all things to bring us toward that end. He is working now so that we start that process right now in conforming our lives to Jesus’ patience, His lovingkindness, His forgiving heart, His graciousness, His generosity. All of these things God is using hardships to produce right now. One day that which God began will be completed.

Before we leave this idea of the afflictions that come upon the faithful, I want to ask you a question. If you were to talk to an Egyptian on the street and tell him two stories, then ask him, “Which person is blessed by God?” or the gods, as they would have asked on the Egyptian street. The story starts off with a seventeen year old kid. I don’t mean to demean seventeen year olds. I was there once. But it feels really young to me now. There is a seventeen year old young man. This is what his family did. His brothers hated him. They wanted to kill him, but instead they sold him as a slave. He doesn’t know anybody and he has nothing.

Then in the next story, let me tell you about this man named Potiphar. He started off industrious and smart. He went to the best schools. He got promotion after promotion after promotion until he is now at the top of his field. He is the captain of the guard of Pharaoh. Which of these two are blessed by God? The person on the street would say of course it is Potiphar. Potiphar is the one blessed by God and Joseph has to be cursed. Those would have been the answers, but those would have been the wrong answers because those are the answers that are understood by sight and not by faith. It’s really important to reflect upon our own lives and the lives of other people around us by faith and not by sight.

In his time of trouble, Joseph rested on the promise that God made to Abraham and to his family. How much more do we have to rest our faith in that Joseph had? We have much more of the fulfillment of the New Covenant as God has enacted that New Covenant through the death of His Son, Jesus. We have so much more cause to trust in Him who loves us so, in the midst of our adversity. We have God’s Son now incarnate becoming one of us for our sake. We have God’s Son dying an atoning death. We have the certain cancellation of our sins. We have God’s Son’s resurrection. It’s the demonstration of God’s power to overcome death itself and Satan. We have God’s Son’s Spirit. He is the deposit that guarantees new life right now and forever and ever and ever in the Father’s house. All of this we have that Joseph didn’t have. Here’s the point. If Joseph could trust in the love of God to watch over him as he is sold as a slave in Egypt, do we not have more reason to trustthe Lord with our troubles and our hardships right now? We can trust His love for us to watch over us as we wake up to some dark and uncertain days.

**The Blessing of the Faithful**

***2*** *The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.* ***3*** *His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.*

How does he see that? There is some way that Joseph is giving testimony to Yahweh, the Lord. It’s not just to any god, but to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Potiphar recognizes that Joseph’s God is making him successful. “He is with you. He is causing everything you do to succeed. He must be a really powerful God.”

***4*** *So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.*

There is no doubt that Joseph, as a young man, is incredibly responsible, resourceful and reliable. He is a great worker. He had learned how to care for a flock and a farm from the time he was a little boy. Now he uses all these gifts that he had gathered in his seventeen years, and with a hard working, positive attitude he serves Potiphar and God blesses him. This attitude is remarkable for a seventeen year old young man who had just been sold into slavery by his brothers. It’s remarkable that he would have such an attitude and such a heart.

Undoubtedly Joseph is going to be tempted to give up on life. “Who cares? I tried to do what was right before. Why even try now?” But in the midst of it, Joseph keeps his head up towards the Lord and he keeps his hands busy with what the Lord places in front of him and God begins to bless him. But let’s not miss the key truth here. The key truth is not the industry and talent of Joseph. The key truth here is about the Lord. Joseph’s success is credited not to Joseph, but to the Lord. Indeed, Joseph labored hard, but God gave blessing to his work.

Again, God places Himself at the center of this drama whereby God is supplying salvation first to this fledgling nation, this young family, and then through this fledgling nation, to the world. That’s what is happening here in this story. God is working through this single seventeen year old as His instrument to bring this about. But God is the one who is doing the work. This is how it always is for the child of God. We can never claim credit for the blessing of the Lord. We must not.

Four times in this chapter, this little phrase becomes the dominant phrase of this whole piece of the narrative. That phrase is “the LORD was with Joseph.” We see it in verses 2 and 3. When we go down to the end of the story, we see it in verses 21 and 23. When the Lord repeats Himself, it is for emphasis. It’s not because He forgot that He said it earlier. It’s always for emphasis. In other words, when the Lord repeats Himself, He wants us to sit up and take notice. This is really, really important. In fact, I would say it’s so important that it’s central to your life.

Whatever else is happening, the central thing is not will I get into this program? Will I get this promotion? The central thing is not will we have more children or have children? Will I get married? Will this person say yes when I ask them on a date? That’s not the central thing. The central thing is, is the Lord with me? If the Lord is with us, then any hardship will work toward an amazing end to our story. If the Lord is not with us, then any blessing will work to a terrible misery at the end of the story. No talent, no skill, no hard work, no discipline will accomplish what the presence of the Lord can accomplish and only can accomplish.

So I ask you again to take a moment. Don’t answer it quickly, but answer it thoughtfully. Is the LORD with me? The LORD was with Joseph in a way that He wasn’t with his ten older brothers. That doesn’t mean the Lord didn’t love his ten older brothers or ultimately use his ten older brothers. He did! But the Lord was with Joseph in a unique way. How can we have the LORD with us? There is a positive and a negative angle to that to think about. Positively, if the LORD is to be with us, we must trust Him. We must place our faith in Him. It’s an active faith. It’s not a faith that we made a decision a long time ago. An active faith is something we wake up with and we feed each day. We must trust Him. The LORD is with those who wholly lean upon Him.

**Jeremiah 17:7** “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.

I love that! If you want a blessed life and you want the LORD to be with you, trust in the LORD and make your trust the LORD. The Lord’s smiling presence is always a gift of grace. It’s not a result of something we earn or merit as a result of something we’ve done. But the LORD delights to simply be with and to bless those who believe Him, who depend upon Him, who lean upon Him in faith. So that’s positively.

Negatively, the LORD will be with us when we turn away from sin. The LORD isn’t with those who willfully commit to disobey Him. Obedience flows from faith. Obedience must not flow from our own flesh. It must flow from our belief in God, our trust in God. But obedience does flow from faith. When we have faith, we believe what God says about His person, about our life. We believe what God says about sin. We believe what God says about its consequences. We believe what God says about our own flesh and about our future. All those things give us power by God’s grace to turn away from sin.

**2 Chronicles 16:9** For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth,

Isn’t that a great picture? Again, God is describing Himself in creaturely ways in order to help us understand His heart. This sanctuary here is part of the earth. Can you sense the eyes of the Lord flowing and looking? What is He looking for? He’s looking to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him, to those who trust Him and obey Him. To every one of you who has come here today, God says, “I want to give you strong support.” Do you need the Lord’s support in your life? God says, “My heart is that I want to give you strong support. I’m looking because I have all this cache, this treasure of support to give. I’ll never run out of the ability to support, no matter how many people there are. I want to give you strong support, but I’m looking for people whose hearts are blameless.” In other words, He is looking for people whose hearts don’t have these willful sins bound up and saying, “I’m just going to walk away from you, God. I’m going to do things that defy you. I’m just going to live my own life.” Friends, there is no sin that is worth forfeiting the smile of God. There is no lust, no earthly pleasure, no longing for wealth, no resentment over some wrongs that we’ve suffered, no selfish pursuit. Nothing is more important to the success of our life than the smiling presence of the LORD.

***5*** *From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field.* ***6*** *So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.*

It is a unique opportunity for believers to bring blessing to unbelievers through our faithfulness to God. I know that unbelievers don’t often appreciate any blessing that we might bring to them. Mr. Potiphar did, but often they don’t see it. It is a unique joy. It is a Godlike character to bless those who are resistant to God. That’s what God does in His love. He allows His sun to shine upon the righteous and the unrighteous. He sends rain upon the field of the righteous farmer and the field of the unrighteous farmer. If you are one of God’s faithful ones, He has placed you in a sphere to be a blessing to the unbelievers around you, whether that’s in your workplace, your neighborhood, or an unbelieving family.

One of the terrible and dark consequences of getting wrapped up in politics, and politics are important. Don’t get me wrong. But one of the terrible things that happens to a soul that gets wrapped up in politics is we begin to see people who don’t agree with our political stance as our enemies instead of people who God calls us to come alongside and to bring His blessing. Joseph had every reason to say “I don’t care about blessing Potiphar. Who is Potiphar? He is an Egyptian who worships another god or many, many other gods. He is an unrighteous guy. He’s a leader in a nation of which I’m not a part. So what would I care? He actually bought me. I’m his slave. So why would I care about any good coming to him?” Yet, Joseph finds joy in being a blessing. That’s what God’s faithful people do.

One of the purposes of our life is upward to worship God, but I really want to be a blessing to every person around me. I really, really want to do that. Sometimes it’s through kind words, sometimes through actions, sometimes through faithful service. But as you think about your workplace and about your neighborhood and about your school and about your family, it’s important to ask, am I receiving the fullness of joy of being a blessing from God as God blesses me to be an instrument of blessing even to unbelievers? It’s a good question. Joseph had that joy.

**The Testing of the Faithful**

*Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.* ***7*** *And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, “Lie with me.”*

Why was Mrs. Potiphar so taken with Joseph? She desired him. Why? It says he was handsome. He was extremely good looking. It’s right for us to observe ways in which Satan and our flesh have doors into our hearts for temptation. Some of you have the burden, I’ll call it a burden, of being beautiful in face and form. I don’t believe that was ever a burden I had to bear, but some of you do. While there are some good things that Joseph experienced and that’s one of the reasons I think why he was hired, there is a spiritual burden and we have to be ready. If the Lord has given you beauty, it’s right to say I want to be very protective of those doors because those are doors that Satan is going to use.

Secondly, I think she was attracted to Joseph because he was extremely competent. Some of you have the burden of being extremely competent in what you do. Your expertise will bring some temptations into your life that others will never experience because you’re so sharp, so skilled, so talented. I think last, she was taken with Joseph because he was obedient to God. Those who walk in darkness often find a challenge in bringing temptation to those who walk in the light. For many of those walking in darkness, there is resentment, anger and desire to bring them out of the light and into the darkness with them.

***8*** *But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge.* ***9*** *He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”*

Joseph was ready for this fight. He didn’t know it was going to come that day. We don’t know when temptations are going to come, but we have to be ready because we know they are going to come. Some temptations in this world are absolutely unavoidable. Here’s the truth about what Joseph said. Our greatest defense against sin is our love for and loyalty to God. He was concerned about how his sin would impact Mr. Potiphar as well. But his greatest offense is he didn’t want to sin against God. He knew God to be faithful. He knew God to be the blessed God. We cannot love God and willfully sin at the same time. We have to choose between the two. Whom will we serve? May God give us faith to be loyal to the Lord, to love Him in times of temptation!

***10*** *And as she spoke to Joseph day after day,*

It was just unending. She was just wearing him down.

*he would not listen to her,*

He said, “Nope! I’m not even going to listen.”

*to lie beside her*

“I don’t want to be close.”

*or to be with her.*

“I’m not going to be in the house if I can avoid it.” His job required him to be in the house sometimes, but he tried to avoid all that.

***11*** *But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house,* ***12*** *she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.*

Joseph overcame sin because he responded wisely to temptations. I want to say this. If Joseph had succumbed to this temptation, what would have happened? We don’t know exactly what would have happened. Maybe he would have gotten caught. Maybe he wouldn’t have. Maybe he would have never gotten caught. But what we know is the story wouldn’t have ended the way it ended, with Joseph being second in command over all of Egypt and being able to provide food for himself and his family to protect a family whom God has set apart to be the family that would bring redemption to the world. It would have impacted you and me. Just as Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden impacts you and me negatively, Joseph’s obedience impacts you and me positively by being part of the redemptive story of God in ultimately bringing the Messiah into the world.

There are five strategies Joseph used to win. I’m just going to run through these quickly. But you can hardly do this narrative of Joseph winning the battle against temptation without saying something about strategies to win against temptation. First, Joseph filled his mind with biblical truth about God and about sin. We know that because of his response.

*How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”*

He is thinking about biblical truth. He is filling his mind with who God is and what righteousness is, what life is about, what sin is. Secondly, Joseph resists Mrs. Potiphar’s temptation with biblically sound arguments. He doesn’t just say, “It’s very flattering, but no thank you.” He doesn’t say that. He actually takes biblical arguments. He took biblical truth and brought it to an unbeliever on why he is going to stand firm in obedience.

Third, Joseph refuses to listen to temptation’s voice. In other words, he doesn’t want to say, “I’m not going to do that, but tell me more about how handsome I am. Tell me more about how wonderful I am.” He doesn’t do that. Joseph avoids temptation as much as possible. In other words, he tries to stay out of the house. He tries to stay out of Mrs. Potiphar’s presence. Joseph doesn’t say, “I can handle this. I can stand firm.” One thing about temptation is many believers say “I want to avoid sin, but I like the warmth that temptation brings me.” So we step closer to the fire of temptation, thinking, I just want to get warm. I’ll stay here in this area of temptation, but I’m not going to jump in the fire. But we don’t know that the ground around the fire of temptation is unstable. We get close and pretty soon the ground breaks and we’re in the middle of the fire. Joseph said, “Here is the temptation. As much as possible, I’m going to stay far from it.” Jesus taught us to pray saying, “Lord, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.” So if we’re taking pleasure out of the joy of temptation itself, not the joy of sin, but the joy of being tempted, we’re outside of the strategy that is successful. Finally, Joseph physically fled in order to overcome the temptation. He got serious. He said, “I’m getting out of here,” and he had to leave his coat.

We see then that Mrs. Potiphar lies. She makes up a story and accuses Joseph. Mr. Potiphar seems like he believers her. He seems genuinely angry. You notice how she even blames her husband.

***17*** *and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me.*

Her story is filled with a kind of racism and she is blaming her husband. All the while, there is a real story underneath that we know.

***19*** *As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, “This is the way your servant treated me,” his anger was kindled.* ***20*** *And Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.*

Most commentators think that he didn’t totally believe his wife because if he believed his wife, he would have had Joseph executed instead of thrown in prison. But he has Joseph thrown in prison.

**The Triumph of the Faithful**

***21*** *But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor*

His love never left Joseph. Brothers and sisters,

**Romans 8:38-39** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I’m convinced of that and Joseph was too. There is a triumph here because it’s interesting. He was a slave, and Mr. Potipher raises him to be second in command in his house. He then gets thrown into prison. The keeper of the prison makes him second in command of the prison. Later, he is going to get placed in Pharaoh’s court and he is going to be second in command there. We see this rise and fall, rise and fall, rise and fall. With God’s people, there are often rises and falls, but with God’s people, the end always is an end of triumph.

The tribulations that are brought on by Mrs. Potiphar here are not ultimate. The tribulations brought on by Joseph’s brothers are not ultimate. Joseph knows that. What is ultimate? God is ultimate. That’s why it’s so vital that we live a life where God is with us. I’m convinced of this that if God is for us, who could possibly be against us? We are more than conquerors through faith in Jesus. Joseph, all the while, kept God’s loving plan in mind in the midst of the dark times in prison. It’s the knowledge of God’s faithfulness that gives him strength to endure, to persevere, to survive. Peace of heart comes not through changed circumstances, but through an activated faith in God.

Here is Joseph. He teaches us to walk by faith and not by sight. He teaches such an instructive and practical lesson. But more than this, why is this story here in God’s Word? Why did God include it? More than helping us learn how to walk through trials by faith, and that’s a key and central theme, Joseph points our attention to one greater than himself who will do more for us than Joseph does. That person is the Messiah, who is part of this family line. This family is going to be preserved because Joseph was faithful right here.

Think of the parallels. Like Joseph, Jesus came to His own to bring a blessing. God’s Son became incarnate to bring a blessing to His own people. Like Joseph, He was despised. His brothers did not accept Him. His brothers forsook Him when He came. Like Joseph, Jesus was sold by someone whom He cared about and loved. Like Joseph, Jesus was tempted sorely by the devil to disrupt God’s plan. Like Joseph, Jesus was unjustly accused of sin, of great wickedness. Like Joseph, Jesus was unjustly condemned. Like Joseph, Jesus set the joy of His future reward upon His heart and He persevered all the way to the end. He completed the work. Like Joseph, Jesus was ultimately exalted and will be exalted.

**Hebrews 4:14** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

I would ask you: Do you have a confession of faith in Jesus Christ? Do you know Him as your Savior? Joseph is pointing us to Jesus, who would make the ultimate sacrifice for us. He died in our place. Hebrews says that since God has given us this one, let’s hold fast to the confession of our faith. So first, do you have a confession? Nothing in life will be meaningful if God is not with you. How can God be with you? It’s by taking on Jesus, whose name is Emmanuel. His name means God with us. So I urge you, if you do not have Jesus Christ as your Savior, come to Him. He invites you to come to Him today.

But for those of you who are followers of Jesus Christ, the book of Hebrews says “let us hold fast to our confession.” In other words, we’re tempted to let go. We’re tempted by this world. We’re tempted by discouragements. We’re tempted by our weakness and feebleness to step back and let go of this confession as being active and lively every day. I want to ask you, are you holding fast? May the Lord be with you!