

A Prospering Slave (3)

The Life of Joseph

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We turn in God's word this morning to Genesis 39. We continue our series on "The Life of Joseph," and we took notice of the fact in Genesis 37 when we read that part of the earlier life of Joseph and when he was sold to the Ishmaelite traders, we noticed that in that chapter, you didn't have specific mention of God there, but we did see how God obviously was present and he was working. But in chapter 39, we do read of God and notice the focus of the chapter that God is with Joseph here. So you keep that in mind as we read the chapter.

The text this morning will be the first six verses.

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. 2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous 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 that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. 5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. 6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. 7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. 8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; 9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? 10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. 11 And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his

business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. 12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. 13 And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, 14 That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: 15 And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. 16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. 17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: 18 And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out. 19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. 20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. 23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

Thus far, we read God's word. Let's ask God's blessing in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we are thankful for the preaching of the gospel. We are thankful Father, that it is the balm that soothes our troubled souls and we pray, Father, that in the sufferings and hardships that we face in our lives, that we would be strengthened to know that thou art always with us. We pray, Father, that the beautiful truth of thy presence as our friend Sovereign would live in our hearts and would be strength in our hearts through this word that we hear this morning and through this may thy name be glorified. All this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

In Potiphar's house in the land of Egypt, Joseph was a prosperous slave. You and I wouldn't think that those two words would go together a "prosperous slave," but that's what the text tells us. He was a man that prospered, and he prospered as a slave. That means that we have to have a right and a biblical understanding of prosperity and success. Joseph was successful, he was prosperous in the home of Potiphar as a slave. What that tells us is that the prosperity that Joseph had was not, first of all, a physical prosperity. There was something to that because of the position that he had in Potiphar's home, but what we want to see and understand this morning is that Joseph flourished. He prospered spiritually.

That would be the last place you'd expect Joseph to prosper because he was away from the church, he was away from the family, he was in this immoral land, this land that was full of wickedness and sin, and he was all by himself. But he did, he prospered spiritually. That's what we see this morning in the life of Joseph, but how did that happen? How could it be that in these circumstances Joseph prospered spiritually? It was because the Lord was with him. We see here and ongoing in the life of Joseph, the preserving grace of God, how God preserved Joseph in these extremely difficult circumstances, and in seeing that we see the way in which God is working in our lives too, in the hardships and difficulties that we face.

Now let me say something about that a moment this morning before we go on. What that means is that as we look at the life of Joseph, our focus is not on Joseph himself. That's a danger in looking at Old Testament history that we focus on the man, that we would focus on a Joseph, we focus on a David, or even in the New Testament to focus on a Paul, that we would immortalize these men. We ought not to do that. I must not do that this morning or as I preach on the life of Joseph, but instead, as we look at these men, and as we look at the life of Joseph in particular, what we see is the work of God. And so that must be our focus, and that is our focus again this morning because the focus here is that God was with Joseph and because God was with Joseph, Joseph prospered there in the home of Potiphar.

In Potiphar's house, we went to see then this morning that Joseph was exactly where God wanted him to be. It was where God wanted him to be. Remember the sovereignty of God but remember also how this happened, that Joseph's brothers sold him to these Ishmaelite traders, these Ishmaelite traders then took Joseph on this long journey down to the land of Egypt and there he was sold to Potiphar. We don't know anything about that transaction. Certainly they tried to make some money on him, but as you will see in the text, Potiphar found out soon no matter how much he paid for Joseph, he got a bargain. He got a bargain because Joseph worked hard for him and became the chief of the servants in his home.

Potiphar, we understand, was a man of power and wealth and influence in the land of Egypt for we read in the text that he was the captain of the guard. He had an important military position in Egypt. He was captain of Pharaoh's guard, probably something like the Secret Service of the President. He was the the captain of the Secret Service of Pharaoh. That probably meant for him that he had to travel with Pharaoh, and he had spent a lot of time with Pharaoh as well, and because of that he needed someone to govern the affairs of his home. But his position meant as well that he was a man of wealth. He had many assets, and that's evident from the fact that he had slaves as well in his home. Joseph wasn't the only one, there are many other slaves and servants in the home of Potiphar. He was a man of wealth and power and influence in the land of Egypt and this is right where God wanted Joseph to be, right here in his home so that God could show his covenant faithfulness in the life of Joseph.

We see important truth for us, then, in this, this morning. We see and know that we are in our lives with whatever we're facing right now, we are exactly where God wants us to be

and we're exactly where God wants us to be so that he can show as well in our lives that he is a God who preserves us, and he is a God who protects us because he is Jehovah, a God who is faithful through his covenant promises. So we keep that in mind this morning as we consider this text under the theme of "A Prospering Slave." This describes Joseph here in the home of Potiphar. A prosperous or prospering slave. You look at the amazing prosperity; secondly, at the only explanation; and finally at the needed encouragement.

As I said, the text points out clearly that Joseph was prosperous. We read that in verse 2, "and he was a prosperous man," and that is developed in the verses that follow that prosperity that Joseph experienced. He not only prospered physically but he prospered spiritually as well in the home of Potiphar, but what makes this so amazing that Joseph prospered is where he is at. He's a slave in Potiphar's house, and as a slave in Potiphar's house, he actually prospers. As I said in the introduction, you wouldn't expect that those two things go together but they do here in the text. This is what's so amazing about it. Joseph went from being the favored son of his father and having a position of management in the family business, and being the favorite son of his father, somewhat spoiled because of that, he went from that to being a slave in a far off land far away from his family, and that was because he was the victim of human trafficking. If we would hear stories of human trafficking today, we would be angry at that. We ought to be. What a horrible sin that is. Joseph had that sin committed against him, sold by his brothers to these traders and they sold him again just as a piece of property, paying a little bit of money for this man's life so that he could work, do the work of Pharaoh.

So he went from this high and exalted position in his father's business to the menial tasks that were part of being a slave. He didn't start out on top. No doubt he had to feed the animals and take care of Potiphar's gardens or sweep the floors, or do some of the worst work that was part of the home of Potiphar, and he was separated from his family in a strange land, he was isolated and how awful that must have been for Joseph. He was away, of course, we saw from the spiritual support, from the love and the care of his father, and there was no communication. No letters. No emails. No texts. No Skype. No FaceTime. No communication with his family. Completely cut off and in a land where the language and the customs were all different. He didn't know the language at first. Not only that, but it was a wicked land. He was surrounded by idolatry right there in the home of Potiphar. Not only that, but he was surrounded by the immorality, the sinfulness and the wickedness of the world. It was all right there, and that's evident from the rest of the chapter. Even the temptation to sexual sin for Joseph, it was all right there and there was no one with whom he could worship God. He was all by himself.

We would understand if we read about Joseph here in Genesis 39, that he was depressed, that he couldn't go on with his work, that he wasn't a very good slave or servant there in the home of Potiphar, that his circumstances had simply paralyzed him. We could understand that if that were Joseph's response to his situation. But he didn't. He prospered as he worked hard. Those are the two things that go together here in the text, he prospered as he worked hard. There's the idea of the prospering in verse 2, "and he was a prosperous man," and then in verse 4 we read, "And Joseph found grace in his sight and he served him." Joseph served Potiphar, and as he served Potiphar, he prospered there in

Potiphar's home. That he prospered means that he was successful in his work. That would be another way that you could translate that word "prosper," that he was a prosperous man. He was a successful man, we want to understand the success and the prosperity of Joseph here. This came by working hard. He served. He didn't use his circumstances as an excuse for slothfulness or inactivity. He wasn't moping around. He wasn't having a pity party for himself. God gave him a calling here in the home of Potiphar and he did that calling to the best of his ability.

His abilities were apparent to Potiphar as well. Potiphar began to admire Joseph as he saw him working there in his home. He admired his hard work. He admired his management skills and his honesty, and certainly this must have stood out among all of the slaves that were in the home of Potiphar. The text indicates that Joseph served Potiphar by making Potiphar's interests his own. That's what Joseph was concerned with in his work, not himself but he was concerned with the good of his master. That's striking. You have the whole concept of stewardship that comes out here in the text. That's what Joseph was, he was a faithful steward of all things that were in Potiphar's home so that eventually he was governing all the affairs of Potiphar's estate. Potiphar didn't have any idea of what was going on. He simply handed it over to Joseph because he could trust Joseph. He trusted his honesty. He trusted his hard work. He trusted that Joseph wasn't going to steal from him, that Joseph wasn't going to take advantage of him. He saw that Joseph was devoted and he was hardworking, he was honest and trustworthy, and he was content as a slave there in Potiphar's home.

In the book of Colossians, Colossians 3, we read of what it means to be a faithful slave. This characterized Joseph. Verses 22 and 23 we read in Colossians 3, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." Now there it's in the form of a command, or if you take that and apply it to Joseph, it was true of him. He was obeying his master in all things according to the flesh, not with eye service, not as a man-pleaser, but in singleness of heart fearing God and doing whatever he did heartily, heartily as to the Lord and not unto men. When you look at the prosperity of Joseph, that's it. It wasn't just the position of authority that he gained in the house of Potiphar, but when you look at the prosperity of Joseph it was this, he served Potiphar. He served Potiphar in the midst of great suffering and hardship. We shouldn't be so superficial and shallow, this morning, that we look at Joseph's prosperity only from the position that he gained in Potiphar's home. Certainly God was in control of that, and that was part of the prosperity here and part of the plan of God, but that's not all it is, and that's not even really the focus. It's this: Joseph here in Potiphar's home, served the Lord. That's his prosperity. That's the success, the spiritual success of Joseph here in Potiphar's home. In this strange, immoral, pagan culture, Joseph was not struggling spiritually but he was thriving. Amazing. That doesn't mean he was without any struggles. We shouldn't think that. I'm sure there were struggles along the way and it wasn't easy for Joseph but, yeah, as he continued on, he worked and he worked and he worked hard not simply to please Potiphar but to serve the Lord.

We see something for us in this, this morning. We see what kind of servants that we must be as followers of Jesus Christ and that's where we have to look this morning too when we look at this history, we have to look to Christ. That's always the question when you look at the Old Testament, you look at Old Testament history, where do you see Christ in this? Well, we see Christ in the concept, in the idea of a prospering slave or servant. One of the things that we learn of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, is that he was and he is the servant of the Lord, or the servant of Jehovah. He was a slave. He came to do the will of God but as he came to do the will of God, as he came to be a servant, as we read in Philippians 2, we understand this, too, that God made the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as servant to prosper. He came to this world to suffer. There was suffering for him in his life, and our Savior was perfectly obedient in that suffering. He obeyed the will of God. He did it perfectly even to the death on the cross. And because he was that kind of servant, he was successful in his work. He was successful in this way, he paid fully for all the sins of his people. We want to see that because we don't understand ourselves in the place where we're put without seeing Christ. So constantly in the Old Testament we're pointed ahead to Christ. We see that here, too. He's a slave, servant of God who did the will of God and paid for all of our sins, and because of that we also are servants, we are slaves in the midst of this world.

From Joseph and Christ we learn that we must be this kind of a servant. We must be a servant of Christ who does the calling, the work that God calls us to do, and when we consider that, that means, too, that we all have vocations. Vocation is simply a calling. And we all have important callings or vocations. We should never think that it's only a minister or only a teacher who has a really important calling in the midst of this world. No, we all have important vocations. We all have important callings. God has given to each one of us an important calling just as God gave to Joseph, an important calling in the home of Potiphar. And that didn't involve being a prophet or a priest or a king. Part of the calling of Joseph, probably when he first came to Potiphar's home, was sweeping floors or feeding animals, or picking weeds in his gardens. Soon he was promoted to management, but even in that he was still a slave and that was his calling. He was a slave under Potiphar and he was to use all of his abilities, then, in the service of Potiphar in that work that he was given to do.

So also God has given to each one of us important callings in the midst of this world in which we serve him. The calling may be of being a carpenter or an engineer, or a farmer or a factory worker, or a doctor, or a nurse, or a mother in the home. And there's vocations in that, too. Father, mother, husband and wife, there are callings involved with that, too, that God gives to us. But what we want to see and understand this morning as we look at the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus Christ, is that these vocations are important before God because God uses them for good. We know the big picture of Joseph's life. God used Joseph's calling there in the home of Potiphar for good. He used it to bring the rest of his family down to Egypt so that they could be preserved alive there in a time of famine, and then God would deliver them in a great and powerful way, and bring them to the land of Canaan. All pictures of the coming Messiah, but all of that in the end, for the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ.

Think about that. Joseph as slave in Potiphar's house was being used by God for the coming of Jesus Christ. That makes Joseph's calling here important and success, then, was not measured in money, it was not measured in position, it was measured in this: he served the Lord in the calling that God gave to him. That's how we ought to look at it, too. Do we look at it that way? We live in a world that says success is measured in the amount of your salary, or success is measured in the position that you have and the number of people who might be below you, but that's not the way it's measured before God. It's this: are we serving him? Are we using the gifts that God has given to serve him in the work that he has given us to do? And we can do that in the assurance that God uses our callings and vocations for good. Just take, for example, a mother. Oh, how God uses the work of a mother in the home teaching her children in God's ways, and God blesses that so that the coming generation knows the truth of God's word and knows what it means to live in obedience before God. But that's not the only calling that has significance either. There's significance to all the callings that God gives to us, and God uses our callings whether it's a farmer, a factory work, or whatever it may be so other people are fed, so other things are made so that we have the things that we need, so that the church has the things that it needs. God blesses the work that we do.

So we're encouraged, this morning, to do our work for the glory of God and in the service of Jesus Christ. That's the way Joseph worked, that's the way we must work as well. But now, as we saw that Joseph prospered spiritually here in this land of Egypt, and then in Potiphar's home as a slave, the question is how could he? How could he prosper here of all places? How could he, while being a slave in Potiphar's home after being sold, after being treated like a very possession, like a piece of furniture that was just passed on from one person to another, how could he serve the Lord in those circumstances? The question comes to us in our circumstances, maybe we're going through a hard and difficult time of suffering and hardship right now, we're overwhelmed by the responsibilities that we have and the callings that we have, we never seem to get anywhere in them, how can we serve God in these circumstances? The beautiful answer of the text is that the Lord was with Joseph and the Lord is with us. The Lord did not abandon Joseph. Joseph was not all alone there in Potiphar's home. The Lord was with him.

That's the beautiful comfort of the word of God to us constantly, it's the beautiful comfort of God's covenant. We're familiar with that concept but it's good for us to understand exactly what that means, that the Lord is with us and that the Lord was with Joseph. The text plainly gives to us, teaches the fact of Jehovah's presence and that that was the reason for Joseph's prosperity. Verse 2, "And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." The point is, Joseph was a prosperous man physically, yes, spiritually especially, he prospered because the Lord was with him.

Notice the name, of course, the covenant name of God, Jehovah. That name which indicates that God is sovereign, that he is independent, that he is eternal and that he is changeless in his love for his people, and unchanging in his promises for his people. That name that means "I Am that I Am." He's always the "I Am." He's the covenant God who makes promises to his people and always keeps those promises. He makes promises to save, to save them from their sins, to bring them to everlasting life with him. And he

keeps those promises although we are sinful. What we read in the text is that although Joseph was a sinful man, although he was far away from family, friends and church, the Lord was with him preserving him and protecting him in these difficult circumstances.

While he was abandoned, while he was separated from his father and his family, he could not be separated from the presence of the Lord, and Joseph believed that, he knew that, he knew God was present with him, he knew that God did not abandon him. That's the beautiful truth that we sang in Psalm 23 and that's taught in Psalm 23 as well, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Then the last verse, "Thy goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." When we talk about the presence of God with us, it's not just that he's there, it's not just that he's watching, we know his sovereignty. We looked at that in the last passages, God's sovereignty, but also he's there, he's present in his goodness and mercy, working all things for the good of his people. Joseph believed that, and he knew that.

Another passage where that's set forth so beautiful, and there's so many passages that use that language, the Lord being with us, but Isaiah 43. "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." The point is, is through the sufferings of life that are characterized by by floods and by fire, we're not alone but the Lord is with us. That's what Joseph experienced. The Lord was with him there. He was not alone in his sufferings.

That's the word of God to us. In the most difficult circumstances of our lives, the Lord never, never abandons us. When we are abandoned by others, when we're separated even from the people that we love, the Lord does not abandon us. We may be separated from people because of death, we may be separated from people because they don't want to be with us, there are those who abandon their homes and families, but the Lord is a God who never abandons his people.

That's what we see here in the life of Joseph. He did not abandon Joseph, but if we're going to see and understand that, we want to understand that concept of the Lord being with us, again we have to look at Jesus Christ because there is the proof and the evidence of that. Remember, kids, what that name Immanuel means? It means "God with us." God, the Son of God came down to this earth. Why did he do that? Well, he came to suffer and he came to die to pay for our sins. Our God did not abandon us although our sins are so great, but instead he came down to this earth and our Savior walked among us, but the point and the purpose of it all, was to pay for our sins. There we see that beautiful truth of God being with us and not abandoning us. He saves us from our sins and now that Savior who came to this earth and who has since then ascended into heaven, he is our sympathetic high priest who knows the feeling of our infirmities, who knows the greatness of our sufferings because he went through a greater suffering than any of us

have gone through. And he does not abandon us. He will not. He cannot because he gave his life to pay for our sins.

Jesus promises, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Whatever hardships and difficulties we're going through, that's the promise of our Savior himself. "I will be with you. I will not abandon you. I will not forsake you. I am with you." But still we might wonder how is it exactly that God is with us and how was it that Jehovah was with Joseph when he was there and lived in Potiphar's home? This isn't just something mystical, it's not just something said, there was a real presence of Jehovah with Joseph. And we notice, first of all, what it was not. To Joseph, Jehovah's presence was not in dreams. I say that because, remember when his father, Jacob, left Isaac and Rebekah, was going to Uncle Laban, he was all by himself and he was afraid as he was on the way to Uncle Laban. Remember the first night in which he stopped and he slept, and then he laid his head down on a pillow, on a stone as his pillow, that the Lord gave him a dream and that was the dream of the angels descending and ascending. And God spoke to Jacob in that dream and assured Jacob that he would go with him as he departed from his parents and the land of Canaan, and that he would bring him back to the Promised Land, and gift him an inheritance in that land. God spoke to Jacob in that time by dreams.

When Joseph was down here in Potiphar's home, we have no revelation that God spoke to Joseph by dreams. Joseph had the dreams earlier that his brothers would bow down to him, but he did not have dreams while he was here in Egypt in the home of Potiphar. And although Joseph didn't have that revelation in that way, God was still with him. I say that because so often in our day that concept of God being with his people is understood mystically, that God somehow prompts people to do something, he speaks in their ears, he whispers something to them, they know the will of God in some mystical way that God reveals it. That's not what it means that God is with us. God is with us in real and concrete ways. He's with us right here in his word. That's how he speaks to us. And when we pray to God, the answer that we receive is in his word, but also in the circumstances of our lives as God is answering our prayers concerning certain things in those ways.

So God's not present in some mystical way, giving dreams, visions, voices, but he speaks to us in his word. But Joseph experienced the very real presence of God with him as God was working in his life to bring this prosperity. That's how Joseph experienced the presence of God. That's what the text is saying there in verse 2, and that connection between the two things, "And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." Then in verse 3, "And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand." This is how Joseph experienced the presence of God, the prosperity that took place. Joseph's ability to work and be a faithful servant in a time of unimaginable duress and suffering, the only explanation for that is that it came from the Lord. This was the Lord working in Joseph's heart and life. Same thing for us in our lives. When there's unimaginable duress and suffering and worries and anxieties that we have, we understand that the only thing that keeps us going is the strength of God, him working in us by his word and Spirit. We experience that as we go along, but then also when we look back upon it. How did I get through that? It wasn't my

own strength, it was the strength of God. God works in the unknowns of our own lives. We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. We would like to think that the suffering we're having right now will be less tomorrow and less the day after that, but there's no promise of that. What's going to give us strength? Not that things will get better, not the things of this earth, but God, his goodness and his promises.

We have to learn to trust more. We don't know what's going to happen going forward, even when it comes to vocation and calling. I think of young people who have to decide that, you have to make decisions about your future, decisions about where you're going to go to college, under the pressure to to know what it is that you're going to do as well, what you're going to go for. And we want to know that, we want to have that all worked out, and some do but others don't have that all worked out. God's not shown that yet. And even in that, we have to learn to trust in God, that he's going to show us what we are to do, and we are to develop, then, the gifts that he has given to us. The same goes in our own lives. We have worries about finances, work, sickness. What's going to happen with all of these things? Well, we experience the presence of God as he's teaching us to trust, to rest in him and his promises.

But God was also present with Joseph bringing physical prosperity to Joseph and Potiphar's house in the way of working hard. Potiphar admired Joseph and made him overseer of his house. Potiphar saw that Joseph was a hard worker and he was not two-faced. He could be trusted with responsibility and even the financial affairs of his home, who's not afraid that Joseph was going to steal anything. So Potiphar made Joseph the overseer in his house. This was all governed by God. Joseph experienced God's presence in that way.

Not only that but it was evident to Joseph and evident to Potiphar, and probably evident to everybody in the house, that God was blessing Potiphar's house for Joseph's sake. Things were going well in Potiphar's house no doubt before this, but there was a change that was evident to everyone when Joseph came there. And it wasn't just that Joseph ascended to this position of authority and management in Potiphar's home, but the home of Potiphar itself was blessed. Not that God was blessing all the people there but the idea is that God was bringing a prosperity, a physical prosperity, that they hadn't had before. There was something different. There was a change that took place. Potiphar even noticed, and that's what he said, the conclusion he came to, verse 3, "And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand." And then verse 5, "And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field." So his garden, his crops, and everything else were thriving as well because of the presence of Joseph.

That doesn't mean that God was blessing everybody there, we understand what God's word says in Proverbs 3:33 that God's blessing is upon the house of the just but his curse is upon the house of the wicked. His curse is upon the wicked and the wicked there in Potiphar's home, too, but the idea of this blessing is that God brought this prosperity to

Potiphar's house for Joseph's sake, for his preservation, for his good, so that Joseph could see and experience in this way the presence of the Lord with him. That's what we have to see in our lives, too. The promise here is not if we work hard God brings prosperity, physical prosperity and wealth. The word of God to us is that no matter what the circumstances of life, God is with us, because in spite of all that was happening that was good in Joseph's life here, he was still a slave and he was still in this wicked land, and he was still separated from his family, and he was still treated like a piece of furniture that was sold from one man to another. The point is, in all of our suffering and when things go well, the Lord is with us. Blessing is not determined by us. Blessing is not determined by the circumstances of life. We see the blessing of God no matter what the circumstances are because he is our God and we are his people.

What's so amazing here in the life of Joseph is that he prospered in the home of Potiphar because of the presence of the Lord. That is the only way that you and I can prosper spiritually in this world in which we live, and that's the encouragement that is given to us this morning. We need encouragement this morning. We need encouragement wherever God has placed us in our lives. Where has God placed you? What's the work that God's given you to do? Are you content with that? Do you see that it's the work God's given you to do? The encouragement is do your best in that. Serve him. God blesses obedience. What suffering do you have? What suffering do you have that was similar to Joseph's suffering? Where have you felt abandoned? Where have you been abandoned? Or have you been hurt by others just as Joseph was hurt by his brothers? But understand this, no matter what that suffering is, the encouragement is God is with us. And because God is with us, we can serve him in our lives.

It can happen for us that because of the suffering and hardship in our lives we can feel paralyzed. How can I go on? How can I do this work? The suffering is too great. That happens to us in lives. We become filled with anxiety and fears and it paralyzes us with all kinds of worries about money, about work, about schooling, whatever it may be, all kinds of worries that it paralyzes us and we don't do the things that we're supposed to be doing and the reason is because we're looking at the circumstances instead of remembering that there is a God who is with us and our strength and our hope is found in him and in him alone. That's the encouragement that we need in all the suffering and hardship of life. God is with us. Our hope, and our strength are found in him alone, Joseph could do his work, he could be faithful in his vocation as a slave in the home of Potiphar because the Lord was with him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ remembered him, too. The encouragement that we need comes from him because he came to this earth as slave and servant and he suffered, but his suffering led to exaltation. As those who belong to him, we know that the same is true for us. There is suffering in this life but suffering leads to this end, exaltation, glorification. Not because of us but because of him and his finished work. And the strength and to be faithful servants where we are, where God has placed us, is found in him and him alone. This morning, our eyes aren't on Joseph, our eyes are on our Savior Jesus Christ. Our eyes are on Jehovah, our faithful covenant God who shows his faithfulness in our lives every day. Amen.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we are thankful for the encouragement of this word, and we are thankful as well for the life of Joseph so that we can see on display the power of thy grace and the greatness of thee, our God, as thou dost preserve and protect him, and may we have the confidence, then, that thou will do the same for us in our suffering and hardship in all of life. Father, give us strength to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ day by day and to find our strength in him and in him alone, and teach us, then, to trust as we ought. Continue to bless us in this day, bring us back here tonight according to thy will, so that we may worship thee again and be refreshed by the preaching of the gospel. All this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

- I. In Egypt, Joseph was a prospering slave. We would not think of a slave as being prosperous.
- II. In Potiphar's house, Joseph was exactly where God wanted him to be.

**The Life of Joseph:
A Prospering Slave**

I. **The Amazing Prosperity**

- A. Not only did he prosper physically in the house of Potiphar, but he prospered spiritually.

- B. In Joseph we see what kind of servants we must be as followers of Christ.

II. **The Only Explanation**

- A. In this time of suffering and hardship for Joseph in Egypt, the Lord was with him.

- B. We learn from the text how God's people experience His presence.

III. **The Needed Encouragement**

- A. This is a needed encouragement wherever God has placed us in our lives.

- B. The encouragement we need comes from Jesus Christ. Let us not keep our eyes on Joseph, but on Christ.