

BECOMING LIKE CHRIST THRU THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE

Genesis 40:1-23

June 12th, 2011 P.M.

Yogi Berra, the famous catcher for the New York Yankees once said: “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’re likely to end up someplace else.”

Joseph was a man who knew where he was going. He may not have known HOW he would get there, but he knew WHERE he was headed.

Even though Joseph knew where he was going as far as his purpose in life I don’t think he had any idea at all what he was going to have to endure to get there. The phrase that Joseph must have heard in his mind over and over in the years that followed while he was imprisoned and maligned was the words of his brothers in Genesis 37:20 “*Now, We shall see what will become of his dreams,*” What a trail of injustice Joseph experienced in the years of his early life following his great dream of his family bowing down to him. He was opposed, imprisoned, maligned, misunderstood, slandered, falsely accused, and wrongly persecuted, yet he discovered there are definite advantages to adversity. Here he is a young man of twenty eight years of age (37:2 41:46 41:1) in the dungeon. **And in the dungeon,**

I. A maturity THAT WAS BEING DEVELOPED

The Psalmist looking back could say, “ *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*” (119:71) Alexander Solzhenitsyn imprisoned under Communism in Russia could say, “ *Bless you prison for having been in my life.*” Ultimately, Joseph could say, “ *Bless you, prison, because it was there God became real.*” Joseph was learning,

(a) THE LESSON OF PERSECUTION:

You see, persecution and suffering are not unusual for the believer. Do you recall Paul's words to Timothy ? " *Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" (2 Tim 3:12) We should not be surprised when we suffer unjustly. Peter says, " *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*" (1 Pet 4:12) So don't be surprised when you suffer for being a believer. (a) The lesson of persecution.

(b) THE LESSON OF PERSEVERANCE:

Do you recall what the psalmist in the 73rd Psalm said ? After looking at the prosperity of the wicked he said, " *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocence.*" (73:13) What he was saying was this. *Is it worth it to be a Christian*

(c) THE LESSON OF PATIENCE:

. James Stalker said, " *Waiting is a common experience of providential discipline for those to whom exceptional work has been appointed.*" Yet in our faster than sound, and instant replay age we know little of this discipline of patience and we value it even less.

Has God enrolled you in the school of patience ? Are you learning to wait on Him ? Do you realize that one of your goals must be not only to discern God's *what's* for your life, but also God's *when's* ? (1) (Maturity was being developed)

(II) A MINISTRY WAS BEING EXERCISED

Did you know there is an entire section of epistles in the New Testament that are referred to as the " *prison epistles* ?" Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon while incarcerated in a Roman prison. The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation while in exile on the isle of Patmos. John Bunyan the author of " *Pilgrims Progress*," wrote his classic while in prison. **Great things can happen in the midst of adverse circumstances make no mistake about it,** "Circumstances do not make us or break us. They merely reveal us for what we are." For in the dungeon he exercised a ministry. Notice it was,

(a) A HELPFUL MINISTRY:

Look if you will at (40:7) Does that not say a lot about Joseph ?

b. A fruitful ministry:

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt in due time.”

(c) A FAITHFUL MINISTRY:

I never thought of this before but it is interesting to notice that Joseph’s life developed in relation to three sets of two dreams each. One set Joseph dreams himself. (37:9) the second set the butler and the baker dream. (40:8) and the third set are the dreams of Pharaoh. (41:1) Joseph’s dreams were of *sheaves and stars*, the dreams of this chapter of *branches and baskets* and the final dreams of the king were of *cattle and corn*. And in all Joseph spoke the truth whether it was good news or bad news. *The lesson from the dungeon is, that if you are going to be the servant of God, you’re going to have to tell the truth, and live with the blast of criticism you’ll receive.*

(III) A MYSTERY THAT WAS BEING REVEALED

The mystery of God’s providence was seen in that dungeon. I mean, *where was God* ? We can see God in the good things. But where is God when the dungeon experience occurs ? Where is God when all is unfair ? Does His silence mean He is absent ? As if Joseph had not suffered enough crushing disappointments we now see,

(a) THE FORGETFULNESS OF THE BUTLER:

For, he forgot Joseph. (40:23)

(b) THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE LORD:

The Psalmist says, “ *Some trust in chariots and some in horses but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.* ” (20:7) Joseph had been forgotten by the butler, but he had not been forgotten by the Lord.

Forget thee I will not I cannot thy name

**Engraved on my heart doth for ever remain
The palms of my hands which I look on I see
The wounds I received when suffering for thee**

I tell you upon authority from God's Word that if you feel abandoned, forgotten, hurt, learn to rest in God's unchanging faithfulness. For "*The Lord will perfect that which concerneth you.*" (Ps 138:8)

It all made sense to Joseph AFTER the fact not while or during his difficulties. Like Joseph we also will understand it all by and by.