

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – SERMON 5

PROSPERITY IN ADVERSITY

Genesis 39:1-6

INTRODUCTION

- Greatness is not determined by what it takes to start you but what it takes to stop you.
- What will it take to stop you; to make you turn from following God?
- Is there a tragedy, a reversal, a calamity great enough to make you forsake your allegiance to Jesus Christ, and go the way of the world?
- While ch.37 portrays Joseph as a type of Christ the Son, ch.39-40 present him as Christ the Servant
- In vv.1-6 we see:
 - ✓ The servant (2; Luke 22:27)
 - ✓ God was with him (2-3; John 16:32)
 - ✓ All his work prospered (2-3; Isaiah 53:10)
 - ✓ All was committed into his hand (4; John 3:35)
- This chapter continues Joseph's story where chapter 37 ended: sold as a slave in Egypt to Potiphar.
- The 38th chapter's sordid account of Judah's character and behaviour is in stark contrast to Joseph's godly conduct in this chapter.
- One thing they did share in common was that they were surrounded by the ungodly
- However, Judah chose such company willingly, while Joseph was forced against his will
- There will be situations where you cannot avoid being around ungodly people
- The Christian is to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world (John 17:15; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10)
- Potiphar's name means "devoted to Ra," a god of Egypt

- As "captain of the guard", he was a very powerful man
- While Joseph was in miserable circumstances, he did not bitterly break under them, nor did he grimly endure them...he *prospered* in them
- Compare the Authorised Version (1611), "a prosperous man" with Tyndale (1534), "a luckie felowe"
- This prosperity and blessing was upon "all" that Joseph did (vv.3,5)
- Many mistakenly view wealth and position as God's blessing and prosperity (1 Timothy 6:5; Revelation 3:17)
- Prosperity is not determined by one's possessions
- The prosperity of the *soul* is the chief blessing from God that we can enjoy (3 John 2; 1 Timothy 4:8; Ephesians 1:3)
- The key to the prosperity of our souls is observing and obeying the word of God (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3)

How may I prosper in adversity?

I. PRESERVE YOUR DEVOTION TO GODLINESS

- A. He was brought to Egypt with nothing
 1. He had been robbed of his country, his family, his position and his liberty
 2. Like Job, the cherished things of this life were taken from him in a moment
 3. In such circumstances, some are prepared to curse God (Job 2:9)
 4. But others remain faithful to God (Job 1:21)
- B. His captors did not rob him of his most valuable possessions
 1. He carried nothing in his hands but he had all he needed in his heart
 2. He kept his integrity, his faith, and his God
- C. A character after God
 1. He was free from all the external godly influence and pressure of parents and peers

2. Yet he had formed his own standards of behaviour which guided his decisions

D. A confidence in God

1. Adversity did not stop Joseph trusting in God's providence and promises

E. A communion with God

1. Four times in this chapter we are told "the LORD was with him" (2,3,21,23)
2. Though no man stood with him, the Lord stood with him (cf. 2 Timothy 4:16-17; Exodus 33:15; Psalm 46:1)

II. PERFORM YOUR DUTIES WITH GRACE

A. Joseph served Potiphar with diligence

1. Others in such a situation would have become bitter and rendered poor service
2. But Joseph served his master to the best of his ability
3. The Christian servant goes the "second mile" (Matthew 5:41)
4. When we are called to serve others, we must serve them as though we are serving the Lord Himself (Colossians 3:22-24)
5. Christ is our example (Philippians 2:6-7)

B. There is reward for diligence

1. Potiphar rewarded Joseph for his diligence (4-6; Proverbs 16:7; Proverbs 22:29)
2. God does not bless the lazy (Proverbs 13:4)
3. Serving comes before ruling (Proverbs 15:33)
4. Those who are faithful in the small matters, can be entrusted with greater responsibilities (Luke 16:10)

III. PROCLAIM YOUR DEDICATION TO GOD

A. The glory is to be given to God alone

1. Joseph only prospered because the Lord made all he did to prosper (v.3)
 2. We have a duty to labour and serve God, but our work will only prosper by God's hand (1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 1 Corinthians 15:10)
- B. The blessing of God flows from the godly to those around him
1. God blessed Potiphar's house for Joseph's sake
 2. Laban was also blessed for Jacob's sake (Genesis 30:27)
 3. Joseph would go on, not only to bless one man's house, but the whole nation of Egypt, and the surrounding nations during the famine
 4. The righteous become a channel of good to others (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:14)
 5. We are to be the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13)
 6. Rivers of living waters flow out from the believer to others (John 7:38; cf. Philemon 7)
- C. Unbelievers are observing the conduct and conversation of believers
1. Potiphar saw Joseph was different from the other slaves
 2. The world notices those with whom the Lord is (Acts 4:13)
 3. Our lives are like "epistles...known and read of all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2)
 4. When a Christian sins, it gives occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme (2 Samuel 12:14)

CONCLUSION

1. Godly influence in early years is vital to prepare young people for future trials of faith (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15)
2. Whatever situation God places you in, occupy till He come (Luke 19:13)
3. Those who wait for the perfect circumstances before serving God will never serve Him (cf. 2 Kings 5:1-4)
4. "Bloom where you are planted" (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)