

**Genesis 39:1-23**  
*The Consequences of Obedience*

As born-again followers of Jesus Christ, we long to be in heaven

- Heaven is a place of untold beauty
- Heaven is a place without sin
- Heaven is a place of unending worship

We long to be in such a place

- But God has us on this Earth for a season

While on this Earth, we are promised many things from the Lord

- We have His Word
- We have the Holy Spirit abiding in us
- We have the peace that comes from having a relationship with Jesus Christ
- We have forgiveness of sin
- We have the privilege of fellowship with other like-minded believers

But while we are on this Earth, we also struggle in many ways

- We still sin on a regular basis
- We lack a right priority in our lives, becoming unbalanced
- We are oftentimes tempted and pulled in many ways

Temptation itself is not wrong

- How we respond to temptation, however, determines whether our actions are right or wrong

I think we have all heard of the little child who prayed, “Lord, lead me not into temptation; I can find the way myself”

- We know what it is like to be tempted

This morning, we will study a man who was severely tempted in many ways

- That man is Joseph

Joseph is 11<sup>th</sup> son born to Jacob

- He enjoyed preferential treatment from his father
- He experienced hatred and jealousy from his brothers

One day, Joseph’s father sent him to check on the well-being of his other brothers

- Joseph faithfully carried out his marching orders

Jacob’s other sons, however, saw Joseph coming from a distance

- They originally planned to murder him
- However, greedy motives caused them to sell him to a caravan of Ishmaelites who were traveling down to Egypt

The brothers thought that they were getting rid of Joseph

- They wouldn’t be bothered any longer by this boy’s selfish dreams for prominence
- They wouldn’t have to witness their father showing favored treatment to Joseph

We left off at that point in the life of Joseph two weeks ago

- It was important to take a break and look briefly at the life of Judah

But we return to study the life of Joseph

- Perhaps for some of you, this is your favorite Bible character
- Undoubtedly for most of us, these are some very familiar Bible stories

### **Let's read Genesis 39:1-23**

Through the example of Joseph, we learn that **resisting temptation faithfully and consistently does not exempt believers from hardship**

Joseph dealt with three different temptations in this chapter

- Let's not think for a moment that these were somehow peculiar to Joseph in his day and age
- Rather, these three temptations are the same kinds of issues that you and I deal with on a regular basis

Genesis is an ancient book

- But God's Word is living and active, according to Hebrews 4:12
- Thus, the Scriptures are binding upon our lives this morning

Consider these three areas of temptation

- Believers are tempted to be proud of their accomplishments (39:1-6)
- Believers are tempted to be unfaithful in their responsibilities (39:7-18)
- Believers are tempted to be bitter because of their circumstances (39:19-23)

#### **I. Believers are tempted to be proud of their accomplishments (39:1-6)**

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.

Genesis 39:1 picks up where 37:36 left off

- We are told that Joseph was taken down to Egypt
- We are told that Potiphar bought him

Joseph is away from home

- He is the possession of Potiphar

Moses reminds us that Potiphar was “an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard”

- He was a high-ranking official
- He was directly involved with the affairs of Pharaoh himself

God providentially arranged each and every event in the life of Joseph

- He was setting the stage for future events

<sup>2</sup> And the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man.

We are told that “the LORD was with Joseph”

- In some form or another, this word is repeated four times in this chapter
  - o Verse 2, “the LORD was with Joseph”
  - o Verse 3, “the LORD was with him”
  - o Verse 21, “the LORD was with Joseph”
  - o Verse 23, “the LORD was with him”

Four times we are told that the presence of the LORD was with Joseph

- Joseph was not alone
- Joseph was not by himself in a foreign land

He may have felt like he was by himself

- But he really wasn't

The presence of the LORD caused Joseph to become “a successful man”

- The secret of Joseph's success was not his charisma or abilities

God defines success in one word – faithfulness!

And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

Since Joseph belonged to Potiphar, Joseph worked “in the house of his master”

- Joseph didn't work out in the fields
- Rather, he was kept inside the house of this high-ranking official

<sup>3</sup> Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

After some amount of time, Potiphar noticed something different about Joseph

- Exactly how, we are not told, but “his master saw that the LORD was with him”
- Potiphar could see the effects of the LORD's presence in the life of Joseph

Furthermore, Potiphar saw “how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand”

- This Egyptian saw how Joseph excelled and prospered
- Potiphar ascribed the credit and success to the LORD, not Joseph

This is interesting

- Already, Moses is giving us hints about the reason for the success of Joseph
- It was entirely due to the LORD, not to Joseph

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.

Because Potiphar realized that the LORD was blessing and prospering Joseph, he promoted Joseph

- Joseph became Potiphar's “personal servant”

In such a position, Joseph enjoyed greater benefits and privileges

- Joseph was made “**overseer over his house**”
- Joseph was responsible for “**all that he owned**”

Imagine this!

- In such a short amount of time, Joseph is promoted
- He is being blessed of God

**<sup>5</sup> And it came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.**

During the time that Joseph was overseer over Potiphar's house, “**the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph**”

- Once again, we are not given explicit details
- Perhaps there was a financial blessing
- The reference to the LORD's blessing “**in the field**” hints that the crops could have done well during Joseph's tenure

This promise of God's blessing reminds us of Genesis 12:3, “**I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed**”

- Joseph is one of the descendants of Abraham
- Unbelieving Egyptians are being blessed because they were blessing Joseph

**<sup>6</sup> So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.**

Potiphar came to a point where he no longer concerned himself with Joseph's leadership

- In other words, Potiphar didn't have to worry about what Joseph was doing
- He completely trusted Joseph

What an amazing statement, “**he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge**”

- The only exception was “**the food which he ate**”

**Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.**

The last phrase of verse 6 seems out of place

- Yet it is perfectly placed in the providence of God

We are told that Joseph was a handsome man

- This serves as a warning of what is soon to take place

Joseph faced a real temptation

- He could have become arrogant
- He was no longer just a servant – he was overseer over the entire household
- Perhaps Joseph was even responsible for other servants – Egyptian servants!

The reality is that Joseph could have been proud of his accomplishments

- After all, he was a faithful man
- After all, he had done the best he could with what he was given in life

That same reality is true of you

- You can become arrogant of your accomplishments
- You can become proud of what you have done
- You can become bigheaded about your success

But over and over in this chapter, we are told the reason for Joseph's success

- Was it Joseph's faithfulness?
  - o Partially, but not completely
- Was it Potiphar's kindness?
  - o Partially, but not completely

We are told that Joseph's success was because **“the LORD was with him”**

- Ultimately, it goes back to the LORD!

Without the LORD, Joseph would have been dead by now

- By the murder of his brothers
- By starvation or thirst in that pit

Joseph owed his entire life, success, and blessings to the LORD

- ***And so do you!!***

I trust that you aren't arrogant about your accomplishments

- **“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble”** (Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5)

Everything that you have in this life is a gift from God

- **“For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”** (1 Cor 4:7)

1 Peter 5:6 warns us to **“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time”**

- Humble yourself under God and He will exalt you in His timing
- Exalt yourself and God will humble you

**The temptation to be proud of your accomplishments is a real temptation for all of us**

- **But there is a second temptation that we face...**

## **II. Believers are tempted to be unfaithful in their responsibilities (39:7-18)**

**<sup>7</sup> And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.”**

While Joseph was being promoted to overseer, I am sure that many eyes were on him

- Some Egyptian servants were jealous of his success, no doubt

But another pair of eyes was more dangerous than the jealous servants

- Verse 7 tells us that “**the master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph**”

We are introduced to the wife of Potiphar

- We don’t know her name
- But she stands as an example of a lustful and dangerous woman

She brazenly tells Joseph, “**Lie with me**”

- Her intentions are clear
- Her intentions are sensual

**<sup>8</sup> But he refused and said to his master's wife, “Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. <sup>9</sup> There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?”**

But Joseph refused the proposition of his master’s wife

- He refused to give in to temptation

Joseph actually gives three (3) reasons why he can’t indulge in an illicit relationship with her<sup>1</sup>

- It would be an abuse of the trust placed in him by Potiphar
- It would be an offense against Potiphar
- It would be a great sin against God

Did you notice that last phrase of verse 9?

- “**How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?**”

Praise God for this right view of God!

- Praise God that Joseph understood this truth

Proverbs 15:3 says, “**The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good**”

- **Joseph knew that he couldn’t hide anything from God!**

Do you view every sin as being first and foremost against God?

- Do you view every sin as an act of rebellion and defiance against the holy, righteous, and longsuffering God?

After King David sinned with Bathsheba, he penned the words of Psalm 51

- Listen to the first few verses of this psalm, “**Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. <sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. <sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. <sup>4</sup> Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight, so that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, and blameless when Thou dost judge**” (51:1-4)

David had sinned against a number of people

- The nation of Israel
- His army
- Uriah

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 2, 375.*

But ultimately, David saw his sin as being against God

Joseph had a high view of God

- So high of a view that he realized that his sin with Potiphar's wife was an affront to the kindness of God

Joseph thought more of God than himself

- He thought more of obedience than convenience
- He thought more of holiness than unfaithfulness

<sup>10</sup> And it came about as she spoke to Joseph day after day, that he did not listen to her to lie beside her, or be with her.

Lest we think that this temptation was a one-time event, Moses is quick to remind us that Potiphar's wife spoke to Joseph "day after day"

- Every single day
- Nonstop temptation

The wife of Potiphar tried to wear Joseph down

- She tried to desensitize him to his conscience

But day after day, Joseph "did not listen to her to lie beside her, or be with her"

- Every single day, Joseph refused her advances
- Every single day, Joseph refused to give in to temptation

From the wording of verse 10, it seems that Potiphar's wife was trying to lure Joseph into a gradual contact

- The text says that Joseph didn't "lie beside her or be with her"

That first phrase may be an invitation to lie beside her on the bed

- Nothing serious, Joseph – just a few moments together
- Nothing rushed, Joseph – just some time spent together

But Joseph refused even this casual contact

- He didn't want to get close to this immoral woman
- He had set his boundaries and was not going to trespass them

Samson endured constant temptation at the hand of a woman (Judges 14:17; 16:16)<sup>2</sup>

- Yet he failed and it cost him his eyesight
- Eventually, it cost him his life

Joseph is being faithful to the warning about the unfaithful woman in Proverbs 5, "For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and smoother than oil is her speech; <sup>4</sup> but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. <sup>5</sup> Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of Sheol. <sup>6</sup> She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know it. <sup>7</sup> Now then, my sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. <sup>8</sup> Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house" (5:3-8)

- What an accurate description of the unfaithful woman
- What a sobering warning to men!

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<sup>2</sup> Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Genesis*, 190.

Temptation doesn't knock on the door

- It leans on the doorbell!

<sup>11</sup> Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. <sup>12</sup> And she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

We fastforward to the future when Joseph is seen to be doing his normal duties

- It was an ordinary day like any other
- Joseph was doing his job faithfully

But we learn that when Joseph went into the house to do this work, "**none of the men of the household was there inside**"

- This is not good
- We are not told whether Joseph was aware of this information

Out of nowhere Potiphar's wife "**caught him by his garment**"

- She violently grabbed onto Joseph's clothes, ripping them from his body

She demanded once again, "**Lie with me!**"

- No longer would she politely ask
- She was demanding Joseph to have relations with her

What did Joseph do?

- He didn't rationalize with her
- He didn't reason with her
- He didn't resume his work

Verse 12 informs us that "**he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside**"

- In a word, Joseph RAN!!!

Joseph was willing to leave his garment behind

- That was the least of his concerns

Joseph cared more for his character than his clothing

- He cared more for his God than his garments

Some may think Joseph to be a coward for running

- In reality, Joseph is a great example to emulate

<sup>13</sup> When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had fled outside, <sup>14</sup> she called to the men of her household, and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. <sup>15</sup> And it came about when he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled, and went outside."

But Potiphar's wife would not be refused like this

- She was used to having her way
- She was used to getting what she wanted

So she fabricates a plan that will make Joseph out to be the bad guy

- Of course, her plan will totally exonerate herself

She calls to the men of the house who were outside at the time of the incident

- She seems to identify with them
- She claims that Joseph tried to rape her

Potiphar's wife is trying to build evidence against Joseph

- After all, who will the servants believe
  - o Joseph or Potiphar's wife?

<sup>16</sup> So she left his garment beside her until his master came home.

After speaking with the servants, Potiphar's wife waits for her husband to come home

- She has the garment "beside her"

<sup>17</sup> Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; <sup>18</sup> and it happened as I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled outside."

When Potiphar comes home, his wife accuses him for the crime

- In other words, if you hadn't brought Joseph into the household, none of this would have happened!
- It's your fault!

The wife proceeds to tell the same lie to her husband as she told the servants

Joseph was in a secluded place with Potiphar's wife

- He could have reasoned that listening to her and indulging her desires was part of his responsibilities
- But he didn't

Joseph realized that no job or individual can override what his conscience tells him

- We have to remind ourselves that this is before the Law was even written<sup>3</sup>
- He didn't have any written laws and regulations to follow

Consider the contrasts between Judah and Joseph

Judah sought out an unfaithful woman from his own lust	Joseph was sought out by an unfaithful woman from her own lust
Judah gave in to temptation	Joseph resisted temptation
Judah suffered the consequences of disobedience	Joseph suffered the consequences of obedience

You and I live in a different time and age, however

- God has given us His complete written revelation
- We have countless examples of faithfulness and unfaithfulness
- We have many exhortations and commands related to purity

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<sup>3</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 561.

Are we faithful and responsible like Joseph?

- He certainly was not perfect
- But he was pure!

The temptation for Joseph to be unfaithful in his responsibilities was real

- A married woman continued to seduce him, day after day
- Yet he rejected her proposals, day after day
- He refused to give in

Where have you become unfaithful in your responsibilities?

- Where have you begun to compromise?
- Where have you begun to give in?

Learn a lesson from Joseph

- When sexual temptation is presented to you, resist it
- When sexual temptation is constantly presented to you, run!

**We have learned about temptation in two areas**

- **Believers are tempted to be proud of their accomplishments (39:1-6)**
- **Believers are tempted to be unfaithful in their responsibilities (39:7-18)**
- **Thirdly...**

### **III. Believers are tempted to be bitter because of their circumstances (39:19-23)**

<sup>19</sup> Now it came about when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, “This is what your slave did to me,” that his anger burned.

When Potiphar heard the accusations and allegations that his wife made against Joseph, “his anger burned”

- He was furious!

Perhaps Potiphar felt betrayed

- Over time, Joseph seemed to prove himself faithful
- Over time, Joseph seemed to be trustworthy

<sup>20</sup> So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

Potiphar was the man in control of the prison system, so it makes sense that Joseph would be put in jail

- Or does this make sense?

Joseph was being accused of raping the wife of a high-ranking officer of Pharaoh

- The penalty for such an action was death<sup>4</sup>
- But Joseph wasn't put to death

For the second time, Joseph is demoted

- His brothers stripped him of his special tunic and threw him into a pit
- Here Potiphar stripped him of his position and threw him into prison

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<sup>4</sup> Kidner, 191.

It could very well be that Potiphar knew the unfaithful character of his wife and decided not to have Joseph killed

- Perhaps the faithful reputation of Joseph was more important than the accusations from his own wife

<sup>21</sup> But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.

Whatever reasons Potiphar had for not killing Joseph is really insignificant

- Potiphar was not ultimately in control

Moses reminds us once again that “**the LORD was with Joseph**”

- This is exactly what we read in verses 2 & 3
- This is like the second chorus of the same song

Not only was Joseph reassured of the presence of the LORD, he was also reassured of the “**kindness**” of the LORD

- This is a precious Hebrew term that indicates God’s faithfulness
- This underscores the covenant-keeping nature of the LORD

Earlier in the chapter, Joseph found favor in the eyes of Potiphar

- Consequently, Potiphar promoted Joseph to be his personal servant (39:4-5)

Here, Joseph finds favor in the sight of the chief jailer

- Joseph was once again seen to be a faithful, loyal, trustworthy young man

<sup>22</sup> And the chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it.

The chief jailer actually gave Joseph the authority over all the prisoners

- Isn’t this interesting!
- Joseph is a prisoner himself, yet he was given responsibility over the rest of the inmates!

<sup>23</sup> The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

Joseph was given so much freedom and responsibility that the chief jailor didn’t supervise him any further

- There was trust and confidence
- Just like Joseph had been given before with Potiphar

An amazing statement is given regarding Joseph, “**whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper**”

- He had the Midas touch!

The timing of such a statement is important for us to consider

- Joseph had just been falsely accused
- Joseph had just been demoted from his position
- Joseph had just been mistreated once again

It would have been very easy for Joseph to become bitter about his circumstances

- He had been faithful to do what his father told him to do and his brothers manhandled him, thrown him into a pit, rescued him, and sold him to strangers
- He had been faithful to do what his owner told him to do, and Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him and ultimately caused him to be expelled from the house

Have you ever been there?

- Have you ever been faithfully serving the Lord and you were falsely accused?
- Perhaps a coworker told a lie that prevented you from getting that promotion
- Perhaps someone told a lie and caused your reputation to suffer

If so, then you are in good company!

- Joseph certainly felt the blunt of ungodly accusations
- The apostle Paul suffered for false accusations against him
- Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Himself was falsely accused
  - o He was ultimately condemned and crucified, all based on a false accusation

The apostle Peter has some comforting words for all of us this morning

- 1 Peter 2:18-24, “**Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.** <sup>19</sup> For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. <sup>21</sup> For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, <sup>22</sup> who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; <sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; <sup>24</sup> and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed”

The next time that you find yourself being falsely accused for your faithful service, then rejoice

- Realize that you are being obedient to the truths of God's Word!
- Realize that you are suffering the consequences of obedience!

Christ Himself said that “**In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world**” (John 16:33)

- What a reassuring message for us this morning
- In this world, we will deal with tribulation, misunderstanding, false accusations, and a host of other sins

But we should be reminded as well that Jesus Christ dealt with these same issues

- He didn't utter a word in self-defense
- He didn't threaten anyone
- He submitted to God

Church, we are not exempt from times of temptation

- You will be tempted to be proud of your accomplishments (39:1-6)
- You will be tempted to be unfaithful in your responsibilities (39:7-18)
- You will be tempted to be bitter because of your circumstances (39:19-23)

But remember that temptation is a choice

- No one can make you sin
- It is always your choice

The only way for you to resist temptation is to have God as your highest priority

- When you give in to temptation, you are affirming that you love yourself and that you deserve to treat yourself
- You are placing yourself on the throne of your life

What Joseph illustrates is a man who is completely dedicated to godly living

- He is a young man sold out to God
- He is completely dedicated to the glory of God

Young men and women, could I challenge you this morning?

- Be like Joseph
  - o Be willing to resist temptation
  - o Be willing to go against what the world says is normal
  - o Be willing to be completely dedicated to the glory of Jesus Christ

But realize that this isn't a message about morality

- We are never to separate morality from Christianity

In other words, you can try to be like Joseph on your own

- But you will fail

We are all sinners

- We are all susceptible to temptation

The only way to resist temptation is to value something more than your sinful pleasure

- Unless you are fully committed to the glory of God, you will fail every time you deal with temptation
- Because in the heat of the moment, you will choose what is convenient to you

Joseph was a faithful man

- He suffered another minor setback
- He went from the pit to the palace to the prison

But the quiet hand of Providence was in full control

- God is merely setting the stage for Joseph
- Next week, we will see how God gave Joseph a prison ministry
- I trust that you will join us