

Scripture: Genesis 30 vs 22 to 24

"And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: And she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son."

Joseph Part 1

In the previous studies on Joseph, consideration has concentrated on the early years of his life. In the next Bibles few studies we will be taking a deeper look into Joseph's life to see what important principles we can extract, and then apply them to our own lives. There is much to learn from the history of Joseph's life! which will be beneficial to us.

These Bible studies will begin from the point Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelite's, and then taken to Egypt and sold there to an important Egyptian officer called Potiphar. It is hard to imagine what Joseph was feeling when this happened to him, he must have felt apprehensive, and wondered about how his future would unfold. He had been taken to a new Country quite a distance from his own place of birth and sold as a slave.

Joseph must have had strong faith in the God of his fathers, otherwise he could possibly been very discouraged and disconsolate, the one thing that saved him was the faith he had in his God. Credit has to be given to Jacob and Rachel for the faith they must have imparted to him, for going through this experience never caused him to lose his faith.

This teaches us a great lesson for if we bring up our children in the ways of the Lord when they are older they will not depart from it, this what Proverbs 22 v 6 says *"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it"*

What we see in Joseph is the same faith that his father and mother had; it is a faith that had been transferred from one generation to the next.

Jacob his father had his name changed following an encounter with The Lord at Peniel, this is an amazing story to read and can be found in Genesis 32 v 24 to 30.

He also had a confidence in the Lord and was consistent in his faith. Joseph was brought up in this spiritual environment, which obviously had a bearing on his life.

Because he was one of the younger sons of Jacob, he was not sent with his older brothers to care and tend the flock that Jacob had. Joseph's problems began after his father asked him to go and see how his sons were getting on looking after the flock, and then bring him word as to how they were.

There was an underlying problem, and undercurrent was already at work. Genesis 37 v 3 & 4 tells us *"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age."*

Also, he made him a tunic of many colours. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him."

When Joseph was sent to find his brothers, he discovered where they were, and seeing him coming towards them the fire of hate kindled within them, and a plan was devised to get rid of him. However, it was obvious The Lord was with Joseph, let us therefore consider certain points that are important to observe.

1. Joseph was Open to God. Genesis 39 v 2 & 3

"The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand."

It is very clear to me that Joseph was someone who lived close to the Lord, and did those things that pleased the Lord, it is my considered opinion that it had been impressed upon him by his father that he should live a life that was in close communion and contact with his God.

Being open to God Means that Joseph made himself available to the Lord, it meant that the Lord had access to his heart and mind, so that he could be influenced regarding the decisions he had to make.

Joseph had been open to the Lords Influence from the earliest years of his life, the access to his mind was there when he was young, for the Lord revealed to him his future, by the dreams he had, It was following his openness in sharing the dreams with his brothers that caused his brothers to be against him.

It is good to be open to God from an early age, the story of Samuel illustrates this to us, for Samuel was only young when the Lord spoke to him, and conveyed something to him, it shows to us that God can reveal himself to anyone regardless of age or nationality.

If we are not open to the Lord, we cannot expect the Lord to reveal things to us, our availability is vital to revelation, often we can fill up our lives and allow so many things to occupy our time that there is little room for the Lord to break in, and reveal Himself.

Joseph was open to God, he enjoyed constant contact and communion, and this resulted in an openness for the Lord to communicate with him. His delight like the Psalmist was on the law of the Lord, and in His law, he meditated day and night.

There are two instances in the N.T. That indicate to us that we should be open to God. In Matthew 7 v Matthew vs 24 to 27 Jesus says *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them,*

I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Then in Revelation chapters 2, 3, & 14 we read *"He who has an ear, let him hear"*.

Like Joseph, let us be open to God, and hear what He is revealing to us as a church.

2. Joseph was Overflowing with Grace. Genesis 39 v 4 to 6

"So Joseph found favour in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field. Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance"

It is amazing that the experiences that Joseph had gone through up to this point did not cause him to have a bitter spirit, he was rejected by his brothers, sold to the Ishmaelite's, then sold as a slave. What he went through did not leave him with a negative attitude to things in life, neither did it induce a feeling of rejection, further it failed to cause him to reject the faith he had in the God of his fathers.

There are so many who blame the experiences they have gone through on how they must strive with things in life, they blame the historical background to their life for all the problems they encounter and their struggles. Joseph held on to his faith and never cracked under the weight of the trials he went through; he is an example of someone who did not let what happened to him get him down. His faith remained strong as we shall see as we proceed, for his Ishmaelite's experience and his Potiphar house trial did not rob him of his trust and confidence in his God.

Potiphar noticed when he bought Joseph that there was something different about him compared to others he had bought as slaves, it was this, Joseph overflowed with the grace of God, the charisma of Christ even in the O.T. revealed itself through him. There was a definite mark on Joseph that distinguished him from others, the thread of divine grace ran through his life from the beginning to the end. It is this distinguishing feature that I believe should mark us out as the servants of the Lord.

When Paul asked the Lord to relieve him of a problem that troubled him, he writes this in 2 Corinthians 12 v 9 & 10 *And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

The grace of God therefore not only sustains, but also strengthens, which is what is shown to us by the apostle Paul. The mark of a man and woman of God is the grace of God.

Following the false accusation against Joseph by the wife of Potiphar Joseph is imprisoned, but even there his life is overflowing with grace, we read in Genesis 39 v 20 to 23 the following verses relating to Joseph.

"Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper."

The bitter experiences Joseph endured never affected the grace of God that was upon him, the time of his of rejection, hardship, and wrongful accusation, never dulled the glow of divine grace that was evident in his life. The verses I have just read are a proof that even imprisonment could not take from him the stamp of grace that singled him out.

He was soon back in favour because the lies, and deceit that were laid against him never caused him to lose his faith and trust in God, he held on tenaciously to The Lord and the Lord held onto him, his life reflected the glory of God's grace.

Throughout the scriptures, there are instances recorded of how those who had a specific role to fulfil for the Lord, were tempted to divert from the ordained path they were on, some never were diverted, people like Job, Daniel, the three Hebrews who were thrown into the finery furnace, which can be read of in the Book of Daniel, Joseph, and Jesus who was tempted in all points as we are, but never sinned. some did in a moment of weakness let the Lord down, People such as King David, Solomon, and in the N.T. Ananias and Sapphires who lied to the Holy Spirit, and Demas who Paul says has forsaken me, having loved this present world. 2Tim 4 v 10.

When you are committed to the Lord, as the Lord is committed to you, there will be times and occasions when you will be tempted in some way, which will seek to divert you away from God's path. Be like Joseph, keep living a righteous, and pure life, and don't allow the grace of God in you to be dulled by the subtlety of the devil. Let us consider next.

3. Joseph Operated a Gift. Genesis 40 v 12

And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it."

During his time in prison after being falsely accused of a miss demeanour by Potiphar's wife, Joseph is given a very responsible position by the keeper of the prison, this shows that Joseph was soon in favour because of the righteous and godly way he lived, the keeper of the prison saw nothing in Joseph to put him under any discipline, or any reason not to trust him.

He had authority over all the prisoners, such was the confidence the keeper had in Joseph, his influence, and righteousness was acknowledged by those in prison as we shall see as we proceed. It seems to me that Joseph was a caring young man, and the prisoners had confidence in him, this is an important principle that should be in all who are leaders, every leader of men and women must have a caring spirit, if they don't, those to whom they are the leaders will not confide or have confidence in them.

A caring leader soon discerns when something is wrong with any one of his people. Joseph was soon aware that something was wrong with two of the prisoners in his charge. Genesis 40 v 6 & 7 says *"And Joseph came into them in the morning and looked at them and saw that they were sad. So, he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?"*

The two men shared with Joseph why they were sad, both men had a dream and there was no one who could interpret the dreams for them, Joseph tells them that only God is the interpreter of dreams. Because Joseph was Open to God, he received the interpretation of each man's dream, and operates a gift. The dream each man had can be read in Genesis 40 v 1 to 19.

The gift that was manifest through Joseph disclosed that one man would be blessed by being restored to his position as a butler and cup bearer to Pharaoh, but the other be judged and condemned to death. Joseph asked the butler to remember him once he was released and restored to his position. Let's consider here how.

4. Joseph was Overlooked even though he was Guiltless. Genesis 40 v 14 & 15, & 23

"But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon" Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph but forgot him.

How distressing this could have been for Joseph after he had foretold the release of the butler, and told him that he was wrongly imprisoned, even though the butler forgot him, I believe though he would have continued to serve the Lord, and continued to hold on to his faith, the Lord was with Joseph, and Joseph stayed close to the Lord.

Joseph never blamed the Lord for any of the evil that had been done to him, he saw evil as an enemy of God, and anyone who perpetrated evil was the enemy of God. I do believe that Joseph held on to the two dreams he had received when he was young, he rested in the unchangeable will of God, and that what the Lord has destined to happen will undoubtedly take place.

It didn't matter to Joseph how long it takes for the Lord to accomplish His will in someone's life, His purpose in the end will be accomplished, in Joseph case he was never diverted away from the path of righteousness, even though there were attempts to knock him off track. A much weaker person could have easily been side-tracked and diverted to go down the wrong path. I have known this to happen, which is always sad to know about.

I referred earlier to Ananias and Sapphira who were diverted away from the path of righteousness by a love of money., who conspired and told a lie, who knows what they could have accomplished for the Lord if they had not been diverted away from the path of righteousness and holiness.

Joseph was forgotten about by the butler who no doubt was happy to be back in the favour of Pharaoh, until one specific day, Gods wheels were continuing to turn, although perhaps very slow, however the time was now right for God to put the final touches to His great plan regarding Joseph.

We have considered four points relating to Joseph, and have noted that.

Joseph was Open to God.

Joseph was Overflowing with Grace.

Joseph Operated a Gift.

Joseph was Overlooked even though he was Guiltless.

We will continue with this study on Joseph and see how the story unfolds to the advantage of Joseph.

