

Scripture: Genesis 37 v 3 & 4.

Joseph Part 2

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.

We begin this Bible study at the very beginning of Joseph's troubles, which can be traced back to the time when his father gave him a coat of many colours, we will continue in the study going through Joseph's experiences until we arrive at the point when all his troubles are over.

When there are problems that occur in one's life, they are not always the fault of the person who has the difficult to handle. Nothing that happened to Joseph could be attributed to anything he had done rather it was external forces that were responsible.

A survey of the scriptures will reveal that there are a number of God's people who had difficulties in their lives, which were not their own fault; it was because these problems were engineered by other people. David had problems that were caused by King Saul, however he also had problems, which were his own fault, and they were of his own making. Daniel's difficulty was not his fault, neither were those of the three Hebrews thrown into the fiery furnace.

In the N.T. in 2 Corinthians 12 we read of a problem that Paul had he says in verses 2 Corinthians 12 vs 7 to 10 *"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 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."*

Therefore, problems occur, either from external forces, or by something attributed to ourselves, a situation that is our own fault. The difficulties Joseph encountered were not of his own making, they were because of what others did to him.

In our Christian life and walk let us make sure we are not the cause behind the problem or difficulties that another Christian has.

As we consider Joseph, his first encounter with a problem came from the family; it came from within his own household. There was an enemy within his own family, let us see what he has to face from his brothers. We need to consider.

1. The Jealousy of his brothers.

This jealousy stemmed from something his father gave him, which was a coat of many colours; it seems Joseph's brothers had a grudge against him because they were of the opinion that their father was favouring him more than they.

It is obvious that they allowed the feeling of jealousy to build up inside them and eventually boil over. Jealousy in the case of Joseph's brothers is a destroyer, it affects the destroyer and those it destroys.

The scriptures speak about jealousy positively and negatively. Let's note its positive aspect first.

One meaning of the word 'Jealousy' in scripture is 'To covet earnestly' "Paul says in 1Corinthians 12 v 31 *"Covet earnestly"* the best gifts. Which is burn with an inward desire for the good and not evil? Joseph had a coat of many colours, the jealousy his brothers, had it have been used in a positive way, it would have meant, that the desire to have what he had, would not have fired hatred, but a desire to have the same.

The envy of Joseph's brothers fueled the fire of hatred, and destruction for this is the negative side to jealousy, which was the type of envy Jacobs sons had towards Joseph. This kind of jealousy generates persecution, and the object of the envy is the one who suffers.

The negative aspect of jealousy does not begin in the one who is the object of the jealousy! but in those who are envious, once it has taken root it begins to grow, and the impact of it causes hurt, damage, and can also destroy.

It is better to want the same gift as someone else, rather than be critical of the fact that they have something of value and you are envious of them because of it. The brothers of Joseph should have asked their father Jacob if they could have the same kind of coat, not planned evil to Joseph.

When Paul says desire spiritual gifts but rather that you may prophesy, he is advising the Christians to ask the Lord for the same gift someone else has, not to be jealous of them but desire the same as them. The next point to consider is.

2. The Jeopardy He was in.

Genesis 37 vs 18 to 24 "Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!" But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father. So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colours that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it"

Joseph was in great danger when his brothers put him into the pit, it was providential that there was no water in the pit at the time. The Lord was obviously behind the preservation of Joseph, even though his life was in Jeopardy at the time.

When the purpose of God in an individual's life has been made known as Joseph's was, the enemies of God will do all within their power to stop that purpose coming to pass.

When David had been anointed by Samuel as the next King of Israel, there were a number of things that took place, which put him in danger, all of them stemming from the King of Israel at the time, who was Saul. 1Sam 16.

We can read about others in the scriptures whose lives were in some sort of danger, individuals like Moses who ran away from Egypt, Elijah who fled from Jezebel. In the N.T. The Lord revealed through Ananias that Paul was a vessel of election, and that he would testify of The Lord Jesus before Kings.

It tells us in Acts 9 vs 15 & 16 But the Lord said to him, *“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”*

The book of Acts records all the occasions when Paul was in Danger, some of these he refers to in 2 Corinthians 11 vs 23 to 28 *“Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool—I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches”*

There are times when Gods elect are in jeopardy as the devil tries to stop them fulfilling the purpose that God in has for them. This is what happened to, Joseph. As the story unfolds, we see next.

3. The Journey into Egypt.

We have considered previously how Joseph was sold and taken to Egypt, and then sold again and bought by a captain of the Egyptian guard Potiphar. The journey no doubt was long and possibly hazardous as they travelled the long distance to be covered.

On the way to Egypt we are given no indication as to how Joseph was, and what was the frame of mind he was in, he must have thought how is Gods purpose for my life going to be fulfilled, I do suspect however that he had listened to his father as he told of his own hazardous journeys, and how the Lord always brought him through, and this would have strengthened him and given him confidence that all would turn out right in the end.

On our Christian journey, things can be tough at times, and some things almost drive us to despair. There are stories that we know about regarding the journeys of great Christian men and women. David Livingstone's journey through Africa how the Lord sustained him as he had Malaria on numerous occasions.

The journeys of Hudson Taylor in China and how he was sustained in bereavement and hardship. The journey of Gladys Aylwood in China, as she fled from the communists. The journey of John Pratto who through difficult situations experienced hazardous storms at sea and eventually reached Papua New Guinea. All of these established and accomplished great things for God. Nothing prevented God from accomplishing his purpose to build His Church.

Joseph was on a journey and was going to see the greatness of God at work, but it was not going to be a fast work, but one that was accomplished in God's time. Eugene Peterson in 'Run with the Horses' says "The mills of God turn slowly while the engines of persecution run exceedingly swift."

The journey of Joseph to Egypt was not the end of the problems he would be faced with, there was more yet to come, how he would cope, how would he handle future difficulties, yet to be unfolded that he was ignorant of, let's see and consider the next point.

4. The Jail Term He Endured.

Genesis 39 v 20 & 22 *"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."*

Joseph may have wondered, what is happening to me? I have lived close to the Lord, have practiced holiness, and purity of life, and now I have become the object of an accusation against me, which is totally false. I made my stand against sin and immorality, and now stand accused of the very thing I stood against and am now falsely accused of indecent assault.

Joseph was imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit; it must be a terrible thing for anyone to be accused of something they never committed. The stigma that is attached to an accusation cannot be underestimated. There would be the mental torture, as well as the physical suffering he must have endured.

Joseph was preserved during his jail term because the Lord was with him, this was evident by the confidence the keeper of the prison had in Him, he was given charge over the other prisoners, which made the job of the keeper very easy.

We don't read that Joseph bemoaned the fact that he was in prison, so he must have been sustained by a Lord, and therefore kept his head above water. It is amazing how the people of God are sustained when going through a difficult and hard time.

The hymn says "when all things seem against me to drive me to despair, I know one ear is open, one ear to hear my prayer". Genesis 39 v 23 says *"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."*

Time does not permit me to mention in detail the prisoners of the English Reformation, when so many Anglican Ministers, vicars, Canons, and Bishops were imprisoned for their stand against Transubstantiation. The history of their imprisonments prior to burning can be read of in J C Ryle's book on "Five Christian Martyrs" Ryle quotes extensively from "Foxes Book of Martyrs" which is most informative book on Christian Martyrdom there is, it is also the best.

5. The Justice Granted to him.

Genesis 41 v 14 to 16 *"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." So, Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace"*

At last, there was light at the end of the tunnel for Joseph, the journey had been long and hard but it was now coming to an end. The butler who was told by Joseph remember to him when restored to his position by Pharaoh, suddenly he remembers his fault, he is quickened in mind, and tells Pharaoh of the occasion when he had been imprisoned because he was out of favour, and how Joseph had interpreted his dream correctly.

It is good to see that Joseph does not give any credit for the interpretation of dreams to himself, but acknowledges the Lord as the one who gives the understanding to him. After meeting Joseph Pharaoh is impacted by what Joseph says to him, Joseph didn't try to impress Pharaoh by persuasive words, he wasn't out to make a name for himself, or look good in Pharaoh's eyes, Joseph only had one purpose in view, it was to glorify The Lord by his life and his word.

How important these two things are, one's life and one's word. The Psalmist says in Psalm 19 v 14 *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer"*. Wonderful words from a man who composed so many remarkable Psalms that express this truth about a life lived for God and a life that expresses the words of a man who has a close relationship with his God.

The words of Job are very fitting for Joseph, this is what he says in Job 23 vs 10 to 12 *"But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."*

Joseph stood his ground for God, he never turned aside, and like Job kept the Lord's commandments, and this is reflected in the life he lived and the words he spoke. Pharaoh was impressed by what Joseph said, he then says Genesis 41 vs 37 to 39 *"So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you."*

What an acknowledgment of the hand of God that was upon Joseph's life.

6. The Jurisdiction he was Given.

Genesis 41 vs 40 to 43 *"You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you."* And Pharaoh said to Joseph, *"See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."* Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and

put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So, he set him over all the land of Egypt."

It is here we see the commencement of the dreams Joseph had in his earlier years beginning to be processed, the first thing the Lord does is give him favour in the eyes Pharaoh, who promotes him to a position of authority. Sheila and I heard a prophecy many years ago titled 'The young Joseph's ' in which the Lord said, I "you give Joseph the pit, slave. Market and the prison, I will give him a place of authority."

Joseph had been given an authority, and only the authority of Pharaoh superseded his. Gods plan for the preservation of Israel was gradually unfolding. There is no man whoever he is or woman that can prevent God fulfilling His promise in relation to, Israel being fulfilled.

What the Lord has *purposes* for you will come to pass on the condition, that you like Joseph never deviate from the path of holiness and purity of life,
We will continue looking at Joseph a little more next week.