

# JOSEPH'S UNJUST IMPRISONMENT

**BIBLE TEXT** : Genesis 39:1-6, 19-23; I Peter 2:18-24

LESSON 34 **Senior Course**

**MEMORY VERSE:** "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (I Peter 2:20).

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Genesis 39:1-6**

**39:1** And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

**2** And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

**3** And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

**4** And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into his hand.

**5** And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

**6** And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was *a goodly person*, and well favoured.

### **Genesis 39:19-23**

**39:19** And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

**20** And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a

## **Bible References:**

### **I Joseph's Prosperity and Faithful Stewardship**

1 Joseph taken into new surroundings, a slave in Potiphar's house, Genesis 39:1, 2;

#### **Genesis 45:8**

So now *it was* not you *that* sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

2 He remains faithful to God and is rewarded by God's blessing and prosperity, Genesis 39:2, 3;

#### **Psalms 1:1-3**

**1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

**2** But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

**3** And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

3 Potiphar promotes him to a position of responsibility, and because of Joseph, is blessed by God, Genesis 39:4, 5;

#### **Genesis 12:3**

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

#### **Proverbs 16:7**

When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

4 Joseph proves himself a faithful steward, Genesis 39:6;

#### **1 Corinthians 4:2**

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

### **II Joseph's Test and Unjust Imprisonment**

1 Joseph is falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, Genesis 39:19;

#### **1 Peter 4:4-5**

**4:4** Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:

**5** Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

2 Potiphar orders Joseph's imprisonment without a fair or impartial trial, Genesis 39:20;

#### **Psalms 105:17-19**

**105:17** He sent a man before them, *even* Joseph, *who* was sold for a servant:

**18** Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:

**19** Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

3 God is present during his time of adversity and trial, Genesis 39:21;

#### **Psalms 34:19**

Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

#### **Isaiah 43:2**

When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon

place where the king's prisoners *were* bound: and he was there in the prison.

**21** But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

**22** And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.

**23** The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that was* under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and *that* which he did, the LORD made *it* to prosper.

#### **1 Peter 2:18-24**

**2:18** Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

**19** For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

**20** For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

**21** For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

**22** Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

**23** Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:

**24** Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

thee.

#### **1 Corinthians 10:13**

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

**4** Joseph is still a faithful steward, even while in prison,  
Genesis 39:21-23;

#### **1 Peter 2:18-24**

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#### **Romans 12:17-18**

**12:17** Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

**18** If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

#### **Notes:**

Joseph is now found in surroundings entirely different from those he had known as a child. His father had great wealth in herds and flocks; but it probably remained for this new experience in the house of Potiphar, in Egypt, to show this young man the real elegance and sumptuousness of life in circles of oriental splendor. He was sold by his brothers into a life of slavery; but we find that even this discouraging prospect did not cause him to forsake the God of his father and grandparents. As a child he had been a true son, successfully withstanding the evil example and influence of his brothers; but now his virtue is to be put to a sterner test than ever before. Through it all he proved God's keeping power in the most trying circumstances, and because of his fidelity he has become a shining example to men of all ages.

God, in His original call to Abraham, promised the greatest of heavenly and earthly blessings to that man of God and to his seed after him. Here we see an instance of the fulfillment of His promise: "I will bless them that bless thee." Joseph became a favored servant of the Egyptian officer; and God honored His promise by blessing Potiphar for Joseph's sake. God does not forget His covenants. He is not slack concerning His promises. We can afford to "stake our claim" on every one of them and depend upon them in every crisis of life.

A sinner can tell whether a person is really serving God or not. Joseph's master saw that God was with him. He faithfully served his master to the best of his ability and proved that he could be trusted in every detail.

There is a great lesson for us here. When we are employed by someone we should make that employer feel, by our faithful and efficient service, that we are the most reliable person in his

organization. In this way he will see the great transformation that God has made in our lives and will become acquainted with the marvelous power in the Gospel of Christ.

A certain knowledge of the true God was current in Egypt, in spite of the fact that His worship was neither established nor tolerated there. This was probably due to the godly life of Abraham, who had sojourned in that heathen land. Potiphar had some knowledge of God, because he recognized the fact that the Lord was with Joseph.

How careful we should be as we live among sinful men! Wherever we go someone is watching us to see if we live up to the standards of the religion that we profess to have. There is no place where our influence is not felt, if we are really in touch with God and Heaven, and no place where our light will not brighten the darkness, if the Light of the world is in our hearts. Joseph was a faithful servant of his God no matter where he was found — in the field with his brothers, in the house of Potiphar as a servant or as a steward, in jail under an unjust sentence, or on the throne as governor of Egypt.

When the tides of life are running smoothly, and all seems to be going well, we must diligently watch lest the enemy of our soul lay a trap and ensnare us. Temptations will come to every one of us. By them we prove our fidelity and love of God. Joseph was no exception, and temptation came to him when everything was apparently going along very well.

As a favored person in his master's house, Joseph had the responsibility of seeing that all the operational details of that wealthy man's estate were carried out. His duties brought him in contact with the wife of his master, and because he was a goodly man she sought to seduce him and lead him into sin. To have yielded to her wishes and suggestions would have meant that he would betray his God and his master. He feared God and loved Him and did not want to do anything that would displease Him. He also felt a great debt of gratitude to his master, Potiphar, who had originally bought him for a slave but who had since that time given him great favor and trust.

Some temptations must be manfully met, resisted and overcome, but we must fly from others. In a case of this kind, if we attempt to contend or reason we shall be ruined. A good maxim to follow is: "Resist the first overtures of sin." Joseph's conduct is remarkably instructive. He did not parley or confer with flesh and blood, because he knew that Egypt was a nation of idolaters, where sin abounded in its worst forms, and the help he might receive would be no help at all.

He was away from the restraints of home and its influences. Many persons in like circumstances have reasoned that they should "fall in with the crowd" and "do as the Romans do." But not this godly man. His piety was not a matter of latitude or longitude. He believed in a God Who was a living Judge, sure to punish the violator of His laws, but Who also was a loving God, ready to reward His loyal servants. He sought to serve this God in all places and circumstances. He did in Egypt precisely as he would have done in Canaan.

Satan's custom is to first tempt man to sin, and then if the temptation is not successful, to accuse him of actually having done it. He is the "accuser" of the brethren. Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph; and failing of her purpose, she charged him with the crime she would have had him commit. She sought by this means to obtain revenge against Joseph and also to save herself from every embarrassment that might come. Every one of us has been accused by the enemy of doing some wrong deed, when that accusation was only a lie concocted by him with a diabolical intent to ensnare

us and cause us to doubt the work of grace that God had done in our hearts. Under such circumstances there is no place for parleying with the devil. It is then that we must resist him with all the strength God gives us, and flee from the hell-fostered temptation and accusation. To take any other course will mean that we will be defeated.

Here the hardest part of Joseph's period of probation, testing, and schooling begins. To be sold into bondage, as a slave, was a severe test of the confidence he had in Almighty God as a protector of His own. But now to be cast into prison on a false charge, when to have yielded to the evil and to have forgotten God and His moral laws and principles would have freed him from this suffering, was a supreme test indeed.. But, thank God, Joseph stood true to God and proved that he could be trusted in a place of high honor in the divine plan for the future.

Someone has said, "Those birds soar the highest that have had the hardest upbringing." God permits His servants to go through periods of hard trial, that every bit of dross may be removed and also that they may learn a strict reliance upon God for every emergency in life.

The immediate result of Joseph's untainted life in prison was another position of trust and confidence, bestowed upon him by the keeper of the prison. The ultimate result of it was the eventual governorship of Egypt and the eternal favor of the great God of Heaven and earth.

### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 Who bought Joseph when he was sold as a slave by the Ishmaelites?
- 2 What kind of service did Joseph render to his new master?
- 3 What will God do for those who favor and bless His people?
- 4 How old was Joseph at this time?
- 5 Did Joseph retain his original good favor with his master?
- 6 What attitude should we take toward the trials that come our way, particularly those in which we suffer wrongfully?
- 7 Did the unfair prison sentence put bitterness in Joseph's heart toward God?
- 8 Was Joseph's master familiar in any way with the God of Abraham and Isaac?
- 9 Why is the proverb "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" a very poor one to follow?
- 10 Tell what lessons in practical Christianity you received from this lesson.