

JOSEPH IMPRISONED

BIBLE TEXT: Genesis 39:1-6, 19-23; 1 Peter 2:19-24.

LESSON 34 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 39:1-6, 19-23;

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;

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.

NOTES:

Far From Home

When Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites he was taken from the land of Canaan forever. He never again visited his home; he never saw any of his family until about twenty years later when his brothers came to Egypt for food. He loved his father very much, and must have loved even the brothers who were so unkind to him, because when he had dreamed the dreams, he had told his brothers about them; and when his father had asked him to make the long trip to Shechem to find out about their welfare, he had gone willingly. He must have suffered extreme homesickness as he left behind everything he knew and loved to go into a pagan land where the people did not worship God.

Some people wonder why Joseph did not try to run away from the Ishmaelites. Their route from Dothan to Egypt led them south, in the general direction of his home, and perhaps at some point in their journey they were not very far from his father's house. But Joseph was a true child of God, and must have felt that God was permitting this terrible calamity to befall him for some purpose, and he was willing to await God's time to reveal His plan.

Joseph's Patience

We often grow impatient when trials come to us, and we fail to realise that God sees the end from the beginning and will not let anything come to us but what is for our good and for His glory. God must have been pleased when He looked at Joseph and saw the patience in him that submitted to his captors and went into Egypt, trusting the Lord to keep him "unspotted from the world." Jacob had, no doubt, told him of the wickedness in Egypt, and warned him of such sins and though Joseph was but seventeen years old, he had purposed to live according to the faith of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had the same determination in his heart that Daniel had many years later when he was taken into Babylonian captivity, and "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat" (Daniel 1:8).

The Midianites sold Joseph to Potiphar, who was a high-ranking officer to King Pharaoh. It was not by chance that Joseph was placed so near to the throne. God was guiding his destiny and preparing him for his work in the future.

His master soon noticed Joseph's beautiful character. As a child of God, he worked willingly and cheerfully; and the work he did prospered so that Potiphar recognised that the Lord was with him. That was unusual, because the Egyptians did not worship the true God. Here is another instance where God blessed the sinners because of the Christian who was in their midst, as was also the case when Jacob lived with Laban.

Joseph's Trust

Potiphar had so much confidence in Joseph that he trusted him with all that he had. He did not even keep a check on what Joseph did. We often see instances where sinners will want Christians to work for them when they need an honest person, or one who will keep their confidence. Sometimes they will trust a stranger who lives godly more than they trust members of their own family. It means much for the person who claims to be a Christian to live so that the world will recognise him as such and will trust him.

²⁰ And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a 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 2:19-24.

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.

Perhaps Joseph thought that now since he had gained great favour he might soon learn the reason for his coming to Egypt. But suddenly all his good fortune seemed to be taken from him. Because he refused to sin against God and his master, he was lied about and cast into prison. Joseph would rather have died than to have sinned against his God, so he had to suffer unjust punishment.

Suffered Patiently

Again we see a parallel between the life of Joseph and that of Daniel. Daniel was also falsely accused and had to go to prison -- the lion's den -- but God went with him and delivered him. Joseph had to wait a little longer for deliverance (he was in prison about three years) but God was with him, too. He gained favour with the keeper, who let him do as he pleased, and he did not even have to give an account of his doings. Here again God prospered all that he did. How remarkably both Joseph and Daniel showed the spirit of Christ when they suffered these injustices without murmuring or trying to get even! Peter said of Jesus: "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter 2:23). That righteous Judge was God; and Joseph also committed himself to Him and was richly blessed for doing so.

QUESTIONS

1. Was the Lord with Joseph in the prison?
2. Is the spirit of revenge ever found in a real Christian?
3. Tell how Christ showed patience in all his sufferings.
4. For whose sins did Christ have to suffer and die?
5. What lessons may we learn from Joseph's patience and obedience?