

JOSEPH: LIVING WITH INTEGRITY – PART 5

Dreams and more dreams

By: Dr. Derek Morris

- Preaching passage: Genesis 40:1-41:37; Psalm 27:13-14
- Subject: What happens to Joseph during his extended stay in prison?
- Complement: The LORD is with him, showing favor to him and giving him the ability to interpret dreams.
- Exegetical idea: During Joseph's extended stay in prison, the LORD is with him, showing favor to him and giving him the ability to interpret dreams.
- Homiletical idea: **Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.**
- Purpose: To encourage my hearers to hold on to the Lord no matter what circumstances they find themselves in, with the assurance that the Lord is holding on to them.

The key thought of this message from the life of Joseph is expressed in an ancient Scripture song, written 3,000 years ago. Listen to the words, and then listen to Joseph's story.

I would have lost heart unless I had believed
that I would see the goodness of the LORD

I would have lost heart unless I had believed
that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Wait on the LORD, be of good courage

And He shall strengthen your heart.

Wait on the LORD, be of good courage,

And He shall strengthen your heart.

Wait, I say, on the LORD, wait, I say, on the LORD.

Joseph was at risk of losing heart. He had just been falsely accused and thrown into prison. Well, perhaps to be more accurate, Potiphar had escorted him to the prison where the king's prisoners were kept. It was obvious to Joseph that Potiphar didn't believe the lying accusations of his promiscuous wife, but Joseph was still in prison, and though the Egyptian prison didn't resemble the dry cistern outside of Dothan, the feelings were the same. Joseph felt abandoned again.

Rejected again. "Where are you, Lord? Deliver me from this place!"

Joseph had to learn to wait on the Lord, and he soon discovered that just as the Lord was with him when he served in Potiphar's house, so the Lord was with him in the prison. We would still see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. We read in Genesis 39:20-23, "....." That's certainly an encouraging report, but even though Joseph prospered in that Egyptian prison, I have no doubt that day after day Joseph cried out to God, "Lord, deliver me from this place!"

We're not told how much time passed, perhaps weeks or months, but Joseph was soon promoted to a position of responsibility in that Egyptian prison. One day some special "guests" arrived. We can read the inspired account in Genesis chapter 40, beginning with verse 1-3. "....." We are left with a lot of questions about what exactly happened in Pharaoh's court. Why was the Pharaoh angry with his cupbearer and his baker? If they had committed a terrible crime, why weren't they put to death? We'll learn in a few minutes that Pharaoh was about to celebrate his birthday. Was his anger related to the preparation for his upcoming birthday celebration? We don't know for sure.

And then there is this term “captain of the guard” in Genesis 40:3. Do you recognize that term from someone else in the story of Joseph? Yes! That is the same term used at the beginning of Genesis 39 for Potiphar. It seems that this prison where the king’s prisoners were confined was actually connected to Potiphar’s house.

That raises another question in my mind. Did Joseph continue to see Potiphar’s wife walking around while he was confined in a prison on the same property? How would that make you feel? The wicked prosper and those who live with integrity suffer. No wonder that Joseph cried out to the Lord, day after day: “Lord, deliver me from this place!”

But now some distinguished “guests” have arrived at the king’s prison, and Scripture records that Joseph was charged by the captain of the guard to care for them. Again, I’m wondering if this is a reference to Potiphar. Was Potiphar hoping that a connection with these two officials might lead to Joseph finding favor in the eyes of the Pharaoh?

The story continues in Genesis 40:5-8. “.....” There is no evidence up to this point in the story that Joseph has been given a special prophetic gift from God. Either he is praying while he is speaking or he surprises himself by his own words! Genesis 40:9-13 “.....”

I want you to notice Joseph’s plea after he interprets the cupbearer’s dream. The plea is recorded in Genesis 40:14-15. “.....” In his mind, Joseph might be thinking, “I’ve been crying out to the Lord to deliver me from this place, and I’m still

here. Maybe I can plead with Pharaoh's official to ask Pharaoh to get me out of this place!

The Pharaoh's baker is encouraged by the favorable interpretation of his colleagues dream, and so he shares his dream with Joseph. Genesis 40:16-17. "....." We can't see Joseph's facial expressions as he hears the baker's dream, but I wonder if he was reticent to give the interpretation. Nevertheless, Joseph answered and said, recorded in Genesis 40:18-19, "....."

Now anyone can speculate about the meaning of a dream, but the events that occurred 3 days later confirmed that Joseph had been given a special prophetic gift by God. Genesis 40:20-22 "....." And then comes that tragic comment in Genesis 40:23, "....."

Have you ever felt totally forgotten, not only by people, but also by God? You cry out day after day and God seems very slow to respond to your prayer? Two full years pass. More than 700 sunrises and sunsets, and Joseph is still confined in prison. Genesis 41:1-8 "....." Then the cupbearer said to the Pharaoh, "Oops! I forget to mention something to you two years ago!" Well, that's my dynamic paraphrase of Genesis 41:9. "....." The cupbearer continues in Genesis 41:10-13. "....." I'm puzzled by the change of pronouns in v.13 of Genesis 41. Instead of saying "You restored me..." the cupbearer says, "He restored me..." It's almost as if the cupbearer is addressing all of the wise men and magicians who are gathered there in Pharaoh's court.

Pharaoh's response is immediate. Genesis 41:14. "....." Was Joseph told why he was being summoned? I can only assume that the captain of the guard, Potiphar, was involved in the transfer of the prisoner from the king's prison to the court of the Pharaoh. One has to wonder what conversation occurred during that trip; perhaps no words at all, but silent messages.

I imagine that Joseph is praying. Remember his earlier confession: "Interpretations belong to God." Perhaps instead of just praying "Lord deliver me from this place," Joseph prays, "Lord, use me in this place!" When he stood before the Pharaoh, the Pharaoh said to Joseph, recorded in Genesis 41:15, "....." And I want you to notice Joseph's response. Genesis 41:16 "....." Joseph chooses to publically honor the God of heaven, regardless of the outcome of this meeting. That, my friends, is living with integrity!

The Pharaoh continues, recorded in Genesis 41:17-24, "....." Joseph's response demonstrated the calm assurance that the Lord was with him in the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. Genesis 41:25-32 "....." And Joseph doesn't stop with the interpretation of the dream. Inspired by the Spirit of God, Joseph gives the following counsel to the Pharaoh, recorded in Genesis 41:33-36. "....." And Scripture in Genesis 41:37, "....."

Joseph has chosen to boldly speak for God regardless of the consequence. Yes, he would like to be delivered from that prison. But more important than the prayer, "Lord deliver me from this place" is the prayer "Lord, use me in this place!"

Some of you are thinking, “Read on, Pastor Derek! This is where the story gets really good. Joseph gets his big promotion!” But Joseph doesn’t know that yet. He just knows that he has chosen to believe that He will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. He has chosen to wait on the Lord and be of good courage, knowing that the Lord will strengthen his heart. He’s still a prisoner. He still doesn’t know what the future holds. But this much is certain. The Lord is with him. Joseph has chosen to wait on the Lord!

That’s a lesson that we all need to learn. In whatever situation we find ourselves, wait on the Lord! Listen again to that ancient Scripture song and make its promise your own:

I would have lost heart unless I had believed
that I would see the goodness of the LORD
I would have lost heart unless I had believed
that I would see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.

Wait on the LORD, be of good courage

And He shall strengthen your heart.

Wait on the LORD, be of good courage,

And He shall strengthen your heart.

Wait, I say, on the LORD, wait, I say, on the LORD.

Someone of you would have lost heart, given up, if you didn’t know that the Lord was with you, wouldn’t you? You would have lost heart if you didn’t believe that you would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, whether during this life or on the earth made new. Life can be hard, unfair, brutal, but you have

chosen to live a life that honors God, to live with integrity, to hold on to the Lord with the assurance that He is holding on to you. And I'm here to tell you today that He will strengthen your heart. Now, in whatever situation you find yourself, instead of simply saying, "Lord, deliver me from this place," you can pray, "Lord, use me in this place."