

Faith Overcomes Pain and Suffering

The faith of Joseph

June 10, 2018

Heb 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

Outline:

Joseph's Problems

Joseph and His Father

Favoritism, the coat of many colors

Gen 37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.

Joseph and His Brothers

Joseph's tattling

Gen 37:2 Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers ... And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

Joseph's coat

Gen 37:4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so, they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. (Gen 37:18, 23).

Joseph's dreams

Gen 37:5-8 Joseph 1st dream, tells it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

Gen 37:9-11 Joseph 2nd dream, tells it to his brothers and father, rebuked by Jacob.

Joseph and His Superiors

Joseph is sold to traveling Ishmaelites (Gen 37:27; 39:1; or Midianites, Gen 37:28, 36)

Joseph is sold to Potiphar (Gen 37:1)

Potiphar's wife seeks to seduce Joseph, he flees leaving behind his clothing (Gen 39:7-12)

Joseph is imprisoned (Gen 39:20)

Joseph's Exaltation

But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him and gave him favor (Gen 39:21).

Joseph and His Superiors

Joseph is put in charge over the prisoners (Gen 39:21-23)

Joseph interprets dreams of the king of Egypt's cupbearer and baker (Gen 40)

He remains in prison for two more years, completing 13 years of slavery & imprisonment.

Joseph interprets the dream of the King of Egypt (Gen 41:1-37)

Joseph is put in charge over all of Egypt (Gen 41:38-49)

Joseph is given a change of clothes, Pharaoh's ring, a new name (Zaphenath-paneah, "revealer of hidden things"), a new wife, Asenath, from among the Egyptian nobility (Gen 41:42-45)

Joseph and His Brothers

Jacob sends all his sons but Benjamin to buy grain in Egypt because of the famine (Gen 42:1-5)

His brothers "bow to him," not recognizing him (Gen 42:6-8).

Joseph treats them harshly, imprisoning them for 3 days before releasing them (Gen 42:9-20).

Joseph keeps Simeon as a hostage, instructing them to bring Benjamin (Gen 42:26-34).

Jacob sends all his sons including Benjamin (Gen 43:1-15).

Joseph shares a meal with his brothers, seating them in birth order and giving Benjamin a double portion (Gen 43:16-34).

Joseph has his cup placed in Benjamin's sack (Gen 44:1-13).

Judah offers himself as a slave to Joseph in place of Benjamin (Gen 44:14-34).

Joseph reveals himself to his brothers (Gen 45:1-20).

Gen 45:5-8 "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life ... 7 "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. 8 "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph and His Father

God speaks to Jacob

Gen 46:3-4 He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. 4 "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."

Jacob brings his family to Goshen, to be near Joseph (Gen 46:5 - 47:19).

Joseph is given a blessing by his father (Gen 49:22-26).

Joseph's two sons are blessed by Jacob (Gen 48:8-22).

Observations:

Faith: The faith of Joseph is based on the word of God spoken to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We do not find a personal encounter with God in the story of Joseph's life.

God: When Joseph speaks about God, he only refers to Him as Elohim; he never speaks of God as Jehovah (His covenantal name) or El-Shaddai (God Almighty). Even though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob understand God in these ways.

Dreams: He does have two dreams, which seems to be interpreted by his brothers and father.

1) eleven sheaves of grain in the field, representing Joseph and his brothers, they gathered around him and bowed down to him.

2) the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him.

Gifts: Joseph has a spiritual gift of dream interpretation; He interprets the dreams of the Cupbearer, Baker, and Pharaoh.

Character: Joseph is one of few biblical characters who seems to have had no flaws.

He tells his brothers and father of his dreams not of the arrogance but naïveté.

He behaves in the house of Potiphar with integrity and industriousness.

When he is the second most powerful man in Egypt, he selflessly dedicates himself to the wellbeing of Pharaoh and Egypt.

As an abused brother, Joseph shows grace in forgiving those who had injured him.

Joseph believes despite adverse circumstances:

It is amazing that Joseph had any faith at all, after going through so many trials and after living in pagan Egypt most of his life. But Joseph never lost his faith in the promises of God. He believed and followed God no matter the circumstances and no matter what it cost him. He was a man of God in a foreign land, a man who demonstrated faith.

1. As a young man, he was betrayed by his brothers and sold as a slave into Egypt (Gen 37:23).

2. While a slave, he was falsely accused by his master's wife of trying to seduce her. He had rejected her advances, choosing to follow God in living righteously rather than to enjoy the fruits of sin (Gen 39:7).

3. He suffered a long imprisonment because the wife falsely charged him (Gen 49:14).
Ps 105:18-19 They afflicted his feet with fetters, He himself was laid in irons; 19 Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the LORD tested him.
4. He lived righteously and ministered to people in prison even when they ignored, neglected, and forgot him (Gen 40:14).
5. Joseph's faith provides for the next generation, he settled his family in the land of Goshen, Egypt (Gen 50:19-21).
6. Joseph knew that Israel would one day be delivered from Egypt, God revealed to Abraham that his descendants would be under foreign domination until "the iniquity of the Amorites" should be made full, and Canaan ripe for possession.
"God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years" (Gen 15:13-16).
7. He believed God for the impossible; that God would be moving his family back to Palestine and eventually give them the promised land. He made the children of Israel promise to bring his bones into the promised land with them, when the nation of his family returned to the land (Gen 50:24-26).

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Gen 50:24-26 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." 25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." 26 So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Ex 13:19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones from here with you."

Jos 24:32 Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.

How did Joseph maintain his faith in such an environment?

1. He maintained his integrity. Joseph steadfastly resisted the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:7-10). He realized that moral compromise would have been an offense not only against his master, but even worse, against God. He remained committed to what he knew was right, despite the consequences.
2. He kept doing his best even when the situation was the worst. Unjustly thrown into prison, Joseph easily could have become bitter at God. He could have given up with the attitude, "What's the use?" Instead, he kept doing what God had designed Him to do, even in prison (Gen 39:22-23).
3. He carried out the task he was given. Promoted to Pharaoh's right hand, Joseph was faithful in the responsibility. He wisely planned for the coming famine and managed the Egyptian economy in a way that saved many lives (Gen 41:46-49, 53-57). He recognized that the work itself was what God wanted him to do.
4. He used his power and influence compassionately. Second-in-command under Pharaoh, Joseph could have used his position as an opportunity to "pay back" his enemies, such as his brothers, the slave traders, and Potiphar's wife. Instead, he used his power to bring reconciliation (Gen 45:3-15; 50:20).

Spiritual Lessons from Joseph

1. Joseph teaches us to **seek excellence** in whatever situation we may find ourselves. What we achieve in life's small things will train and equip us for the greater challenges ahead.
2. Joseph teaches us **to live morally pure lives**. We, too, live in a world filled with temptations. Keeping ourselves pure honors God and shows respect for others.
3. Joseph teaches us to **maintain a positive attitude when treated unfairly**. Others often abused Joseph, but he never gave in to despair. He continued to do his best in every circumstance, and in so doing, he prepared himself for the future God had in mind.
4. Joseph reminds us that while it is divine to **forgive**, we must **also be wise in our relationship with those who have harmed us**. We are always to be willing to forgive, but this does not mean we must foolishly trust ourselves to others who have proven untrustworthy before. Joseph's test of his brothers' character was not undertaken to help him decide whether they were worthy of forgiveness, but rather to determine whether they were worthy of trust.
5. Joseph reminds us that fulfilling God's purpose in our lives is more significant than our experiences along the way. Many Christians have suffered for God's greater good and found joy in doing so. We need to look beyond ourselves - beyond our own wants and desires - and take satisfaction in serving Him.
6. Joseph reminds us of the wonder of forgiveness and its healing power. As God has forgiven us, so we are to forgive others, freely and completely. To the extent that others will receive the forgiveness we offer, the hurts of both culprit and victim can be healed.
7. Joseph reminds us that in due time, God will exalt and reward the one who honors him (Jas 4:10; 1Pt 5:5-6).
8. Joseph reminds us that God can use human sinfulness for his glory (Gen 50:20; Ps 76:10).

References used in this study:

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