

## **Genesis 39:1-6 True Blessing 9/16/18**

*Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. <sup>2</sup> The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. <sup>3</sup> His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. <sup>4</sup> So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. <sup>5</sup> From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. <sup>6</sup> So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.*

*Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.*

(Pastor prays)

We are following the saga of the family of God in Genesis. We've come to the greatest, least known of the patriarchs: Joseph. And besides the Lord Jesus himself, there isn't another person in the Bible whose character is more clear or life more righteous than Joseph, which is remarkable given the circumstances and surroundings of his environment. They are living in Canaan and, so far, Canaan has been a horrible experience for the people of God. It's partly why I'm not preaching Chapter 38. Chapter 38 is an R-rated short story designed to show us Judah's depravity, to compare it to Joseph's chastity, and to awaken us and remind us that Christ came to redeem a deprived and estranged people.

Chapter 39 picks up where chapter 37 left off, and in Chapter 39 everything has changed for Joseph: from being a favorite son to his loving father Jacob, Joseph has become a slave in the house of a foreign official. This is a hard change — from being a favorite son of his loving father to being a hated, faceless servant. And although we know how the story turns out, Joseph doesn't. His future hangs in the balance. He's alone in Egypt, he doesn't speak the language, his family has abandoned him, and his father thinks he's dead. On top of all that, he's a slave. There's only one prevailing and undying truth that gives him hope: The Lord was with him.

Today is a good day to remember that. It is a good day for me to remember that, that this is my Father's world, and by grace alone in Christ alone I am adopted and loved, and all the blessings of all time are not in money, things, people or success but in Christ. Today, I want you to see and meditate on this truth.

## **Christ Is the Blessing**

### **Blessings Have Almost Nothing to do With Circumstances**

Let me show you what I mean. Verse 1 is a catch up verse but it also tells a little bit about Joseph's circumstances. *Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.* He was brought down to Egypt, kidnapped against his will, mistreated and thrown into a pit. He was treated like an animal, stripped of his rights and abandoned by his family. He was purchased like a sub-human by a high-ranking Egyptian soldier, a man hardened by war and accustomed to brutality. Joseph was a slave. To get a handle on and a feel for the situation Joseph is in, you could read books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Road to Dawn* or *12 Years a Slave*. His situation is made all the worse because he wasn't born a slave. He was a favorite son. His previous freedom made the shackles all the more heavy and yet there's something the writer wants us to see in verses 1-6 and it has to do with the word "all." *His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.*

Joseph is Potiphar's slave, but he's God's man. Joseph is over Potiphar's house, but he's under God's blessing. Blessings of God have very little to do with the circumstances that he's in. This is helpful to me. This is helpful to thousands of Chinese pastors and Christians who are being persecuted right now. Robert Smith said, "We don't need a Gospel of prosperity; ours is a Gospel of adversity."

There's something else in the narrative that I will mention again next week, but this chapter ends and begins in the exact same way to remind us that in good times and bad, Christ, God, is with us.

Let's look at these two bookends and the times in verses 2 and 3, and verses 21 and 23, YHWH was with Joseph at the most vulnerable, most uncertain times of his entire life. Joseph is in a predicament he didn't ask for with no way out and, yet, at his darkest point, a little refrain in the text keeps popping up: The Lord is with him. For those of you who are Christians, this should be a familiar tone: God is with us. You can take that little phrase and draw a straight line to the Gospel of Matthew 1: 23 when the Angel says *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).*

That is Christ. This passage reminds us to get our eyes off the trivial things of life and *onto* Christ, that Christ is the blessing, and if you have Jesus Christ you are blessed. I think there's something else worthwhile to see about God's blessings.

### **God's Blessings Are Given To Be a Witness**

All of this is going on with Joseph. God has him serving as a slave but notice who was watching it right there in verse 3. *His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.* God's grace is recognized by a man who is otherwise a heathen. Even his name Potiphar the means "Dedicated to Ra" the sun god.

Here's an idol-worshipper giving testimony to God's grace in a slave. A social superior saw God at work through Joseph. Regardless of who you are or the status you have, every believer is an ambassador for the Lord, sent into unclaimed regions to establish outposts for the King of Kings. But we don't do it like the nations of the world, by conquest. We do it by service. In verse 4, Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him. Joseph served him in humility.

Joseph's attitude is a full foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. Remember what Paul wrote for us in Philippians 2: 6-8 about Jesus, *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Once again Joseph points us to Jesus. But I'd like to press on the similarities a little harder. I want you to read verse 5 and see how the Lord works in Joseph's life and how it affects Potiphar. *From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field.* Now there is a sense that a community or family or even a city is blessed, all better off because of the presence of God's people. But with Joseph as a pointer to Christ, this text reminds us that God doesn't bless Potiphar because he's good or righteous or nice; he blesses Potiphar by grace because of and on behalf of Joseph.

Here again is the Old Testament narrative pointing us to a New Testament truth. God doesn't bless us or save us or even love us because of anything *we* do or are. He blesses us by *grace* alone through *faith* alone in *Christ* alone. Jesus lived a perfect life on our behalf and died an atoning death on the cross in the place of sinners, so that all the blessings of God and all the promises of love and all the hope for the future are found in Christ alone. Christ is the blessing, the anchor, the rock, the bread, our shepherd, our Savior. There is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ. Trust Him.

*(Pastor prays)*