

Joseph Was Falsely Accused

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children make the choice to follow the example of Joseph when he was being tempted by the wife of Potiphar. In this topic, we will see that the wife of Potiphar chose to falsely accuse Joseph when she did not get what she wanted.

Genesis 39:13-15 says, “And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, ‘See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside.’” We saw in our last topic that Joseph chose to flee from temptation. However, the wife of Potiphar was angry that she had failed in her attempt to seduce Joseph. As a result, she decided to get revenge by falsely accusing him of a sin he did not commit.

The wife of Potiphar immediately accused Joseph to the other men who worked in her house. They had been out of the house when she tried to seduce Joseph. As a result, she called to those men and made her accusation to them first. She had grabbed the garment of Joseph to try to get what she wanted. Joseph had fled immediately. When she kept holding that outer robe, he left the garment behind. Now, she used that robe to accuse Joseph. She told the other men to look at the outer garment. Then, she added, “See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.” The first thing she did was blame her husband. Then, she made it sound like her husband was against both her and the other Egyptian servants. She claimed that he had bought this Hebrew slave to mock them. This word is used in Genesis 21:9-10, where we read, “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.’” In these verses, the word is translated “scoffing” and that was the reason Sarah told Abraham to cast out the bondwoman and her son.

The wife of Potiphar used that word to accuse Joseph. She wanted to make these Egyptian servants angry at Joseph so they would back up her story. Then, she said that the reason Joseph had come into the house was to commit sexual sin with her. She then claimed that she had cried out with a loud voice. She said that when Joseph heard her calling out with a loud voice, it caused Joseph to flee. In his hurry to escape, he had left his outer robe behind. She said that he had fled out of the house and gone outside. In her efforts to get revenge, because Joseph had rejected her attempts to seduce him, she made it sound like he was a very evil man. She said he had only fled from the house because of her cries.

Genesis 39:16-18 goes on to say, “So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, ‘The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside.’” The wife of Potiphar kept the outer garment she had pulled off Joseph as he fled and waited for her husband to come home. When he came home, she repeated the lies she had told to the Egyptian servants. She again called Joseph the Hebrew servant. She reminded her husband that he had brought Joseph into their house by purchasing him as a slave. Then, she made her accusation against Joseph. She said Joseph had come into the place where she was in the house to mock her. Here, we see that she made it sound like he had come to where she was in the house to try to rape her. Of course, she was actually the one who had tried for many days, probably weeks, to seduce Joseph and get him to commit adultery with her. Each time, he had refused. However, when she had grabbed his outer garment and held on to it, he had pulled his arms out of the garment and had fled outside to avoid her temptations.

In contrast, she gave a very different reason why he had fled out of the house. She said that she had lifted up her voice and cried out loudly. She said that only then did he leave his garment with her and flee out of the house. Joseph had been faithful to the Lord. Many years later, Paul wrote to Timothy, in 2 Timothy 2:22, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Joseph had fled so he would not yield to the temptation. He had called out to the Lord out of a pure heart. Joseph had made it clear to the wife of Potiphar that he would not sin with her because it would be great wickedness and sin against God. However, the wife of Potiphar, who had not been able to carry out her own sinful desires, falsely accused Joseph of the very sin he had refused to commit.

We go on to read what Potiphar did when he heard the false accusation of his wife. Genesis 39:19-23 says, “So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, ‘Your servant did to me after this manner,’ that his anger was aroused. Then Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners *were* confined. And he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who *were* in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything *that was* under *Joseph’s* authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made *it* prosper.” Here, we see that because he was falsely accused, Joseph was put into the prison where the prisoners of the king were confined.

Potiphar was very angry when he heard the words of his wife. Since Joseph was a slave, his master could have put him to death. However, his master chose to put Joseph into the royal prison instead. This may have been due to the fact that even though Potiphar was

very angry, he was not convinced that Joseph was guilty.

Meanwhile, the Lord allowed Joseph to be placed in the prison because the Lord was working to prepare Joseph for the future ministry the Lord had for him. James 1:12 says, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Joseph had experienced temptation and would continue to experience additional testing in prison for several years. However, Genesis 39:21 says, “But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” While serving Potiphar, Joseph had learned to manage everything that belonged to Potiphar. Now, he was in prison, even though he had chosen to do what was right. We are reminded that the Lord was with Joseph while he was in prison. The Lord also chose to show mercy to Joseph in that prison and the Lord gave Joseph favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. This favor came from the Lord because the Lord was going to use the prison to prepare Joseph for the future.

Like Potiphar, the keeper of the prison soon learned that Joseph was a good administrator and the keeper of the prison soon committed all of the prisoners in the prison into the hand of Joseph. The word translated “committed” is used more than two thousand times in the Old Testament. Slightly more than half of the time (one thousand and seventy-eight times), the word is translated “give”. Here, we see that the keeper of the prison gave Joseph the responsibility for the particular work that was done by all of the prisoners in the prison. In Genesis 40:17, we read, “...In the uppermost basket *were* all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.” In this case, the baker had made the baked goods for Pharaoh before being sent to the prison. In the prison, each prisoner had a responsibility to do certain things. Joseph became the man who assigned tasks to each prisoner.

The keeper of the prison had delegated to Joseph the responsibility for assigning the tasks that each prisoner was to do. The keeper of the prison was so confident in the abilities the Lord had given Joseph that he did not even inspect the tasks Joseph assigned the other prisoners to do. This shows us that the keeper of the prison knew Joseph would make certain the various tasks were done properly by the other prisoners. However, Joseph did not depend on his own abilities. Instead, we read that the Lord was with Joseph. Here, we see the real key to effectively doing whatever the Lord gives us to do. When the Lord is with us, we can trust Him to guide us. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Joseph trusted the Lord with his whole heart. He did not depend on his own understanding. Instead, he looked to the Lord to guide and direct him as he assigned the various tasks to the different prisoners. The result was that the Lord directed him and guided his decisions. We read that the Lord made everything Joseph did prosper.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to depend on

the Lord to guide them in the things they do and direct their paths in whatever work the Lord has for them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to seek the understanding and direction of the Lord in all that they do.