

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – SERMON 1

HIM THAT WAS SEPARATE FROM HIS BRETHREN

Genesis 49:26

INTRODUCTION

- Joseph's story is one of the most entertaining and inspiring accounts in the whole Bible
- It has been taken and adapted to plays and films for the entertainment of the world
- But this is not a mere piece of entertaining literature, it is the inspired Word of God, and there are two main spiritual applications of the life of Joseph
- Firstly, Joseph is one of the greatest types of Christ in the Old Testament
- He was the beloved son, the good shepherd, the sent servant, the brother who was sold, the lonely sufferer, the honoured statesman, the world's saviour
- Secondly, it is a demonstration of the providential hand of God in the life of his servant, through good and bad, to bring about the deliverance of his chosen race, and keep his covenant promises
- While the entire canon of Scripture is a record of divine providence, there are some parts that especially emphasise God's preserving and governing His creatures (cf. Ruth & Esther)
- If we were to attempt to sum up the life of Joseph in one sentence it would be this: "The LORD was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2,21; Acts 7:9)

- Another related phrase which helps to understand Joseph's story is in Genesis 50:20, "God meant it unto good". (cf. Romans 8:28)
- The record of Joseph's birth is found in Genesis 30:22-24
- His name means "adding", prophetic in nature, looking forward to the birth of Benjamin. (cf. Hebrews 2:10)
- Of the many events that shaped Joseph's childhood, the death of his mother at the age of seven would have left the greatest impression
- It seems that he gradually grew distant from his brothers and closer to his father over the following years
- But at some point in his youth, he made a decision that he was going to live his life to the glory of God, and that's what he did
- In Genesis 49:26 Joseph is described by Jacob as being "separate from his brethren" (cf. Deuteronomy 33:16)
- The Hebrew word for "separate" in those verses is the same word used for "Nazarite" in Numbers 6, when it describes the voluntary vow of the Nazarite
- The use of that word demonstrates how sanctified, set apart, and separate Joseph was from his brethren
- In this also, Joseph pictures Christ (Hebrews 7:26)
- Joseph was the second youngest of twelve sons, yet in character and conduct, he excelled them all; he stood head and shoulders above the rest – he was "separate from his brethren"

Consider three areas in which he was separate from his brothers:

I. HE WAS SEPARATE IN HIS POSITION

- A. Favoured of his father (Genesis 37:3)
- B. The firstborn son
 - 1. Reuben lost his birthright (Genesis 35:22; 49:4; 1 Chronicles 5:1)
 - 2. While not the firstborn of Jacob, Joseph was the firstborn of Rachel
- C. Chief in position
 - 1. Joseph was responsible for reporting to his father on the state of his flocks (Genesis 37:2)
 - 2. His special coat represented his position in the family (2 Samuel 13:18-19)

II. HE WAS SEPARATE IN HIS PURITY

- A. His brothers lived in worldliness
 - 1. Immoral
 - a. Reuben (Genesis 35:22)
 - b. Judah (Genesis 38:15-18)
 - 2. Cruel (Genesis 34:13-29; 49:5; cf. Luke 9:54-55)
 - 3. Hateful (Genesis 37:4,5,8; cf. 1 John 2:9,11; 3:15; 4:20)
 - 4. Envious (Genesis 37:11; Acts 7:9; James 3:16; 4:5)
- B. Joseph lived in godliness

1. He exposed sin when he saw it (Genesis 37:2; cf. Ephesians 5:11)
2. He avoided sin when tempted (Genesis 39:8-9; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13)
3. He forgave sins against him (Genesis 50:21; cf. Luke 17:3-4)

III. HE WAS SEPARATE IN HIS PRIORITIES

A. Obedience & respect for authority

1. Joseph knew his place, and he gave honour where honour was due (Exodus 20:12)
2. Reuben's sin is illustrative of the disrespect Jacob's other sons had for their father

B. Faithfulness to God

C. Service to others

1. Joseph looked for ways to help others (Genesis 40:6-8)
2. His brethren looked only to profit themselves (Genesis 37:26; Philippians 2:4)

CONCLUSION

1. Joseph shows us that it is possible, by the grace of God, to live a holy life even "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" (Philippians 2:15)
2. Like Joseph, and his antitype, the Lord Jesus, we are to live lives that are separated from sin (2 Corinthians 6:17)
3. When my life is over, will others be able to sum up my life with the words, 'The LORD was with him'?