

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – SERMON 7

BOUND, YET ABOUNDING

Genesis 39:20-23

INTRODUCTION

- Joseph, whether he is seen from afar or up close, in blessing or adversity, is shown to be a godly man of integrity
- In this chapter we find many aspects of Christ pictured in Joseph the servant:
 - ✓ Falsely accused (16-18; Matthew 26:59-60)
 - ✓ Detained and bound (20; Matthew 27:2)
 - ✓ Offered no defence (20; Isaiah 53:7)
 - ✓ Suffered under Gentiles (Acts 4:26-27)
 - ✓ Anguish of soul (Psalm 105:18; Matthew 26:38)
 - ✓ Respected by his captor (21; Luke 23:47)
- What relevance does the story of Joseph in prison have for me today?
- A prison is a place of bondage, captivity, where we lose our liberty; an unpleasant place we would rather not be in.
- The Scriptures use the term “prison” to describe trouble and distress (Psalm 142:7)
- The Holy Spirit describes Job’s trial as “the captivity of Job” (Job 42:10)
- Job’s captivity was the loss of possessions/finances; bereavement; sickness and disease; betrayal of loved ones; false accusation and persecution by friends.
- A prison may be regarded as any circumstance in which we suffer the loss of those things that bring comfort in life.

Joseph teaches us three principles concerning prisons that, if embraced, will enable us to be bound, yet abounding.

I. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD ORDAINS THE PRISON

A. Joseph's sad circumstances

1. His feet were "hurt with fetters" (Psalm 105:18)
2. It is called a "dungeon" or pit (Genesis 40:15)
3. His reputation was destroyed
4. He was "sorely grieved" in his soul (Genesis 49:23; Psalm 105:18)

B. Yet this was God's plan for him

1. Joseph would later testify of his time in Egypt: "God sent me" (Genesis 45:5,7,8)
2. The godly will humbly receive both good and evil from the hand of the Lord (Job 2:10)

C. God's providential hand oversees every event

1. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures.
2. The heart of even the most powerful king is in God's hand (Proverbs 21:1)
3. God uses the wrath of wicked men to bring praise to Himself (Psalm 76:10)
4. All things work together for good to them that love God (Romans 8:28)
5. God afflicts in faithfulness (Psalm 119:75)
6. This truth comforts and sustains the believer during trials (Matthew 10:29-31)

II. THE PRESENCE OF GOD OCCUPIES THE PRISON

A. God was with him to prepare him

1. The thirteen years of captivity tested Joseph's faith (Psalm 105:19; cf. Acts 7:29-30)

2. God's timing is not our timing (Ecclesiastes 3:1; Habakkuk 2:3)
 3. We need patience (Hebrews 6:12; 10:36) which is learned through tribulation (Romans 5:3-5)
- B. God was with him to provide for him (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- C. God was with him to purify him (1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:2-4)

III. THE PROSPERITY OF GOD OVERCOMES THE PRISON

- A. The Christian's joy and peace are not dependent on outward circumstances
1. We must guard against bitterness and resentment during times of trial (Ephesians 4:30-31)
 2. The believer's relationship with God does not change with circumstances (Ephesians 2:6)
 3. In every situation, serve and glorify God (Ecclesiastes 9:10; 1 Corinthians 10:31)
- B. Prisons have proven to be the most fruitful places in the lives of God's people
1. Samson – humbled in the prison (Judges 16)
 - a. Some prisons are the result of our own sin and the chastening of the Lord (Revelation 3:19)
 - b. God strips us of those things which cause us to sin
 - c. During these times we are led to repentance
 - d. God can restore our former strength
 2. Jeremiah – persevering in the prison (Jeremiah 37)
 - a. He preached the truth and was severely persecuted for it
 - b. Yet none of this stopped him from continuing to speak the word of God
 3. John the Baptist – perception in the prison (Matthew 11:2-6)

- a. John had some doubts and misconceptions about God's plan
- b. He gained a fuller understanding of Christ and His work
4. Peter – the power of prayer (Acts 12)
 - a. Peter's imprisonment drew the church together to fervent, continual prayer
 - b. His miraculous release demonstrated the power of God to all
5. Paul – God glorified in the prison (Acts 16)
 - a. Paul and Silas prayed and sang praise in the prison
 - b. This was a testimony that led to the conversion of souls
 - c. His later imprisonment "fell out unto the furtherance of the Gospel (Philippians 1:12-14)
6. John the apostle – revelation in the prison (Revelation 1:9)
 - a. John was exiled on a barren, desolate island "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"
 - b. It was here he received visions of the throne of heaven, the judgment of God, the glorious return and reign of Jesus Christ, the New Jerusalem, and the new heavens and earth.

CONCLUSION

1. The greatest prison from which man requires deliverance is bondage to sin and death (Hebrews 2:15)
2. Only Jesus Christ can bring liberty to such captives (Isaiah 61:1)
3. Knowing that God providentially sends trials for our good, we must "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3)
4. Christ has promised "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20)
5. Can we say with Paul, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13)