

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – SERMON 8

PERSEVERANCE IN PRISON

Genesis 40

INTRODUCTION

- Those who are Christ's are promised crowns, mansions, and eternal bliss.
- Yet first we must endure affliction, suffering, persecution, trials and troubles.
- *"The bitter must come before the sweet, and that also will make the sweet the sweeter"*
- God showed Joseph that he would be exalted, and others would bow before him, but there would be years of suffering and humiliation before that glory was realised.
- During these years, the authenticity of Joseph's faith was tested.
- Joseph had overcome temptation of the flesh in Potiphar's house
- He demonstrated his faith was genuine by his perseverance (Hebrews 3:14)
- *"But, dear friends, perseverance is not the experience of the few; it is not for just the faithful preachers of the Word, or only for the elders or deacons of the church, rather it is the common experience of every true believer in the Church. It must be so, for only by persevering in the faith can they prove that they are believers."* (C H Spurgeon)

- It would have been easy for Joseph give up his faith (cf. Ruth 1:20-21)
- But far from wallowing in self-pity, he grew in his love for God and for man (cf. Matthew 22:37-40)
- This is how Joseph persevered in the prison

I. HONOUR THE LORD IN ALL SEASONS

A. Be careful to deflect all praise to God

1. God will not give His glory to another (Isaiah 42:8)
2. God honours those who honour Him (1 Samuel 2:30)
3. God will judge those who steal His glory (Acts 12:23)

B. Praise God at all times

1. The godly have demonstrated that it is possible to glorify God in every circumstance (Psalms 34:1; Job 1:20-22; 13:15; Philippians 4:4; Matthew 26:30)
2. God gives “the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isaiah 61:3)

C. This will be the natural outflow of one in communion with God

1. Joseph had previously demonstrated he had a wholehearted love and devotion to God

2. His utmost confidence in God's help to interpret indicates his personal communion with God

II. HELP OTHERS IN THEIR SORROW

- A. Serving the needs of others (4)
 1. This is fulfilling the "royal law" (James 2:8)
 2. Serve others, even in the prison (Philippians 4:22)
- B. Observing the needs of others (6)
 1. The flesh is concerned with self, but the Spirit on others (Romans 12:15; Philippians 2:4; Luke 24:17)
 2. Be a refreshment to others, not a drain (Philemon 1:7)
 3. Actively seek out those in need (Galatians 6:2)
- C. Speak the truth
 1. People need someone to interpret and guide them to the Christ (Acts 8:30-31; Romans 10:14)
 2. They need to hear positive (12-13)
 - a. The penitent must be told of the Saviour who offers them rest for their souls (Matthew 11:28-30)
 - b. We are to use edifying and comforting words to those who sorrow (Ephesians 4:29; 1 Thessalonians 4:18)

3. They need to hear the negative (18-19)
 - a. Faithful preaching involves reproof, rebuke and exhortation (2 Timothy 4:2)
 - b. Most people prefer to hear “smooth things” (Isaiah 30:9-10)
 - c. The damned souls in hell wish for faithful preaching that warns sinners of the destruction that awaits them (Luke 16:27-28)
 - d. All Christians have a responsibility to warn and rebuke in love (Proverbs 27:5-6)

CONCLUSION

1. Perseverance in the faith is not achieved by our effort, but by God’s grace
2. We must seek the Lord’s grace to endure the trials of life
3. “keep me from falling, and present me faultless before the presence of thy glory” (Jude 24)
4. The entire law hangs on two commandments: love God, and love man.
5. In order to keep these commandments, self must die (Galatians 2:20)