

Genesis 39: 1-23; "And the Lord was with Joseph", Sermon # 100 in the series - "Beginnings", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 10th, 2007, in the Morning Worship Service.

We have now passed through the interlude of examining Judah's sin with Tamar and how God overruled that for their good in His having them to become parents in the line of the descendants of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were positively sinful in their acting in the way that they did, but God sovereignly chose to build upon their sinful act even though he did not in any way approve of it. God is never the author of sin, nor does He ever approve of it or wink at it, but if it is His purpose He will build upon it things which will be for our good and for His own glory. I hope that each one of you believes this, because these stories are not given to us, here in the book of Genesis, simply to impress or entertain us. They are given to us so that we might consider them in relation to our own lives, in light of the things that we learn about God and human nature. God expects that, when we have come to realize where others have failed, that we might avoid it; or where they have been successful like Joseph, that we might also come to live righteously in the many difficult situations of temptation that we face in this life. Joseph's example of standing for righteousness is something that I hope we will all learn from. I hope that you will understand that these temptations and difficulties that Joseph faced may also come to you, a believer, even when you are a young person. I hope that you will understand that God sovereignly chooses when to bring testings and to permit temptations in our lives. The devil can do nothing to you except what he gains permission from God to do. God is so much greater than he is, that He controls the devil on a long leash, so that all of our God's righteous purposes are accomplished. You and I must remember this when we are in the midst of our greatest difficulties. There are lessons that we will learn, as believers, which can only be learned in adversity; and there are things that we will become and do only if we are able to pass the test of temptation. With Christ we can do all things. The lesson that we learn from Joseph in this text is one that I hope that each of you will remember. It is; that you and I who trust in God can still be prospering in the sight of God even when we are undergoing our greatest trials. Even though Joseph had been taken captive into Egypt and did not have the influences of any other godly person with him; and even though he did not have any book of the Scriptures to direct him, still the Lord was with him in the most difficult of temptations, to watch over him and to work all things together for his good in order to fulfill God's greater purpose in his life. So the question that we want to

ask of this text this morning is this. "How, in particular, was the Lord with Joseph so that these good things came about?" Because, even though he was in these extremely difficult circumstances, we find that the Lord was with him in the following ways.

1st- The Lord was with Joseph in Potiphar's household and made all that he did to prosper. (Verses 1-6a)

I think that when we first hear of Joseph's successes in business matters and strength in overcoming temptations, that we conclude that this was simply a matter of his trying to do the right thing. He was industrious, we think to ourselves; he was very determined to do what was right, we reason to ourselves. And this is why the Lord blessed him. It is no doubt true that the Lord rewarded Joseph's pursuit of righteousness with His blessings. But where did his desire to be faithful come from? I would assert to you that it came from the Lord. You should understand that the greater thing at work here was not Joseph's faithfulness to God. This is what grace is all about. It was God's faithfulness to Joseph. God was intending to make Joseph an exalted ruler over many people, and for Joseph to be a godly and good leader, he must bring him through many trials and testings of his faith. But God would also prove His sufficiency to Joseph, so that his faith would not fail in this new culture and in his lonely position, so far from home. Indeed, you should note that the reason that Joseph was faithful, the reason that he took holy initiative, was all because God was working in him and with him. It is true that he was industrious and that he was a young man using godly principles. "A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished."(Proverbs 28: 20) He was indeed on the lookout to see how he could help his master in the running the household and he was a man who was faithful in little things and details of how he could better help his master's household to prosper. But it was much more than this, and we should never forget it.

First of all, it was the Lord who had Potiphar purchase Joseph to be his slave and then revealed to Potiphar the fact that He was with Joseph. The Lord did these wonderful things for Joseph in order to fulfill his purpose in regard the to important things in Joseph's future exaltation. But Joseph knew nothing of that at that time. He was faithful with everything that was set before him when he was in the lowest station. This was because the Lord showed him that "before honor comes humility." (Proverbs 15: 33) The first part of that verse says, "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom." God was "instructing Joseph's heart as a disciple." He had no book of the Scriptures to consult. But I am sure that he consulted God in prayer, and cried to Him for wisdom." And the reason that Joseph prospered was because God's grace was at work in him, making him satisfied to look out for the interests of his master because he knew that this

would be pleasing to God. God gave Joseph this understanding of heart to look at his position of servitude in this way. Let me ask if you have learned this lesson in the presence of your Master, Jesus Christ? Are you content to serve Him, by learning to serve others whether it is your boss at work, or learning to be a servant in your family or in the church? Are you seeking for God's glory and the advancement of Christ's kingdom in your heart, wanting others to know how powerful and satisfying His grace really is? This is what it means for the Lord to be with you. When the Lord is with you, true, real, and tangible success comes. This does not mean that you will become rich, but rather that the interests of God, and everyone you work for, and associate with, will profit from what you do. Are you interested in being rich toward God, or rich toward yourself? Proverbs 20, verse 6 says, "Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?"

Success in the Christian life does not mean an absence of hardship, difficulty, or that we will always be surrounded by Christian friends. It does not mean that we will be popular; but it does mean that as God purposes, we come to have a right view of ourselves and others see the reality and value of God at work in us. And we will be promoted in God's good time, the time that he sees that we have learned these lessons which Joseph learned. Verse 4 says, "So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him." "Then he made him overseer of his house and all that he had, he put under his authority." The man who will be a good steward and a good leader is the man who will take the position of a servant. This is what our Lord Jesus Christ did. Philippians 2: 5 and following says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." "Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name." The true Christian is content to serve in order that God's name might be glorified and honored. He will only want to be exalted as far as God will deem it wise to exalt him. He will be content with the lowest station in regard to His kingdom. "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside." "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of My God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalm 84: 11)

You will find that when you take this godly position of humility that God will see fit to bless others for your sake. Verse 5 says, "So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field." "Thus he left all that he had in

Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate." It is a good thing when people who are over you in authority can trust you with what responsibilities have been given to you. You are not selfishly asserting your own rights and claims, you are not there simply to get your paycheck and then go home. You are not even looking for the praise and approval of men. You are simply trying to be faithful and serving others as unto the Lord. Others will see that the Lord is with you. Those over you will see that they can trust you, and they will then entrust you with all the more. Luke 12: 48 says "And from everyone who been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more." Joseph was a successful man because the Lord was with him and made all that he did to prosper in His hand.

Secondly - The Lord was with Joseph to bring to his mind holy reasoning in the midst of great sexual temptations. (Verses 6b-12)

It says, "Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance." "And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me.'" This is certainly one the most bold and daring sexual sins which is recorded in Scripture. Sudden temptations like this are difficult to resist. How, then, did Joseph resist it? We need to know this because we are now living in a time and in a society when because of the developments of technology and the media, sudden temptation can come to us at a moment's notice. And it is coming to us on a regular and on-going way through our exposure to the television and movies. What was the reason that Joseph did not succumb to this temptation? It was because the Lord was with him in the thoughts of his mind to fortify him against being overcome by it. Think about this with me. In order to overcome temptations to immoral behavior we must have arguments against any participation in it. And, we must act upon those arguments. Joseph refused her invitation to go to bed with her, and he refused it on the best of grounds. First, he remembers and states to her the goal of all that he is doing there in household. He reminds her of what position of authority and responsibility that her husband has raised him to. To these responsibilities he expressed his desire to be faithful. He would be faithful to her husband to fulfill the household responsibilities. He calls her husband, "my master". "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand." Whenever sudden sexual temptation comes to us we should immediately think of the word "faithful" and think of it in relation to ourselves in that very situation. "Am I being faithful?" Sexual sin is a form of great unfaithfulness in your duty to your own wife or husband, or to your future wife or husband if you give yourself to it. And it is a form of unfaithfulness to the other person's wife or husband. Our resistance to

sin must begin here if we are to overcome. A Christian seriously works at being faithful to keep their own and other people's chastity. This resistance can be reinforced by motives of kindness and goodness that have been shown to us by people around us. "Have I not been shown and taught the right way by my parents?" "Has it not been of the Lord's mercies that others have seen my desire to be faithful, and am I now to violate their trust?" "This I will not do." He reminds her that her husband has been very good to him and has "committed all that he has to his hand." Then secondly, he states that nothing has been kept back from him except her because "you are his wife," he says. It is always important during times of temptation to sexual sins, that we remember to respect another person's marriage and chastity, even if they do not respect it themselves. It will prove that we know by grace, that God has given us every good thing to enjoy in its proper place, even sex, within the bonds of holy matrimony. But Joseph knew that this advance of hers was sinful and he said so. It is also good to remind the one tempting us of their duty to be faithful to their wife or husband.

But the greatest argument to fortify Joseph's mind comes last of all. And it is the strongest of all. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Committing adultery with this woman would be, in Joseph's mind, "sin" and "great wickedness" against God. I wonder if you have come to see sexual sins in this way? The real problem with our tolerating sexual lusts and desires in our hearts is that we have not considered them in relation to either God or man. God should come first in our thoughts. If we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our strength, how can we even begin to do this when we have sexual desires for someone that we are not married to, running through our heart and mind? No one else can see our heart and our mind, and we could hide it well. And we could hide it for years. But all of that time, it is something that our God has before His eyes, in plain view. He sees it all even much more clearly than we do ourselves, and how it must grieve Him when he sees it in His saints. If the mind is filled with these kind of thoughts, how shall there be good and lovely and pure and true thoughts that will lead to loving and godly actions in our lives at all. How can we be thinking of God? This is why the Apostle Paul says in 1st Thessalonians 4, verses 1- 8, "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus." "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take

advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified." "For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness." "Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit."

This is our sanctification; to make progress against these lusts and desires and sins of the flesh. Potiphar's wife spoke to Joseph "day after day" in this way, but "he did not heed her." When she finally set a trap to entice him into this sin, he fled from her. The way that we do so, is to so fear God that we flee from this kind of sin, as Joseph did. We flee because we fear dishonoring Him and disgracing ourselves by falling into even one sexual sin. We fear sinning in our thoughts as well as our actions. Job says in Job 31: 1-4, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?" "For what is the allotment of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high?" "Is it not destruction for the wicked, and disaster for the workers of iniquity?" "Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?" Some of us here this morning may need to make a covenant with our eyes. We need to say, "By your grace, O my great and gracious God, I will not incline my eyes to look lustfully upon a woman." "Please give me this grace continually so that I might be faithful to you and to my wife or husband." Notice from our text that this is a sin which begins with the eyes. "His master's wife cast longing eyes upon him." Usually when we think of sexual sins, we think of men being tempted through the eye gate. But it is also a sin that can be found in women as well. Make a covenant with your eyes that you will not be unfaithful to God and pursue these vain things that result in disaster. Listen to Job once again. Job 32: 9 - "If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door, then let my wife grind for another and let others bow down over her." "For that would be wickedness; yes, it would be iniquity deserving of judgment." "For that would be a fire that consumes to destruction and would root out all my increase." O what great wickedness this sin is against God and others and ourselves. It dishonors God in that He is robbed of pure thoughts coming from us. It dishonors our relationship with our wife or husband and it robs them of the thoughts and actions that we owe to them. It dishonors our own bodies because it is a sin which is committed against own bodies.

This is why masturbation, sex with ourselves is wrong. This is why fornication, sex with someone before we are married is wrong. This is why adultery, sex with someone else when we are already married is wrong. This is why sexual lust which is generated by looking upon another person's nakedness is wrong in all of its forms. It "consumes to destruction" our relationship with God, and our relationship with the one we will, or are married to. It is a sin which cannot be allowed to come in to the eyes or the mind. It will defile and it

will destroy everything that is good. It will "root out all my increase." It will prevent me from having fellowship with God and it will cause Him to remove His blessings. This Joseph believed, and he acted upon it. This is what you must believe if you are to overcome these temptations. The Lord must be with you in the reasonings of your mind. Pray to Him and ask Him not only to forgive you for whatever degree of indulgence that you have tolerated in these things in the past, but pray that the covenant that you make before Him with your eyes would be honored by Him and that He would give you the strength and the grace to resist all such sins.

3rdly- The Lord was with Joseph when he was falsely accused of the very sin that he had successfully resisted. (Verses 13-20)

It is truly amazing what this sin of Potiphar's wife led her to. It led her to lying. This is often the case with sexual sins. Either a person gets what they lust after and they have to lie about it to cover up their sin and shame. Or they do not get what they want and they then go about to destroy the reputation of the other person. I like what Matthew Henry says about this. "Joseph's mistress, having tried in vain to make him a criminal, now endeavors to represent him as one; so to be revenged on him for his virtue." "Now was her love turned into the utmost rage and malice, and she pretends she cannot endure the sight of him whom awhile ago she could not endure out of her sight." "Chaste and holy love will continue, though slighted; but sinful love, like Amnon's to Tamar, is easily changed into sinful hatred." Joseph had left his garment with her, as a result of his fleeing. She will use it as evidence that he had tried to rape her. She claims that she cried out with a loud voice and that that was the reason that he fled. "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." Now is the hardest test for Joseph. "Is this the way that the Lord rewards faithfulness?", he might think to Himself? He might feel justified in thinking hard thoughts of God. "Surely if there were a God watching over me, He would never permit this!", he might think to Himself. But will you not see that God was with Joseph even in this; that he was put into the prison where the "king's prisoners were confined." This is really a promotion in disguise. For it will be from this vantage point that the Lord will raise him up to be very great; the second in command to Pharaoh in just a few years. Sometimes it is hard for us as God's people, to understand that the Lord is with us, when we have been demoted for doing what is right. But the Lord never forgets any of our acts of obedience. And he will eventually reward all faithfulness. We must trust Him for this, or our obedience will be very incomplete. I will speak more on this at a later time.

And then finally- The Lord was with Joseph when he was in the prison and still made everything he did to prosper.(Verses 21-23)

Verse 21 says, "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Will you not think about this glorious truth as we close our time together this morning? The Lord is able to turn the heart of any person to show us favor, if that is in accordance with His purpose. This verse states that it was because the Lord wanted to show Joseph mercy, that he had this take place. God is so good to us, even in our greatest troubles if we are trusting in him. He will prove himself faithful to us over and over. God works in the hearts of unbelieving people by His common grace, to show us His faithfulness and His love. He will not forget us, even in the worst of our trials. His purpose is greater than all of our trials. And He can make us to prosper even in the worst of our states and the lowest of our living conditions. This is why it is always best to be the "Lord's prisoner." If you are in the prisons of men's making because of your faithfulness to the commandments of the Lord; know that you are even more "the Lord's prisoner" and He will be with you in that most dreaded of places. God so worked with Joseph that "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 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." This is truly a beautiful way that the Lord showed Joseph that He cared, and that He knew that Joseph had been faithful and He was rewarding that faithfulness. Joseph still had more to learn. The "iron would have to enter into his soul." But the Lord would be with him in this also. May we see these truths this morning in light of any trials and difficulties and temptations that come to us. And may we each trust in the Lord's faithfulness as we seek to have a sincere obedience to our God.