

ADVERSITY, SUCCESS, ADVERSITY, SUCCESS**Genesis 39****(Read Genesis 39)**

Intro: As I pointed out last time, I'm preaching this series using entire chapters as my text. Two weeks ago I gave you a heads-up that I would be preaching from chapter 39 for this message, so let me do the same and let you know that, Lord willing, I will be preaching from Genesis 40 next Sunday – in case you want to read ahead.

On a Sunday morning in a small southern church, the new pastor called on one of his older deacons to lead in the opening prayer. The deacon stood up, bowed his head and said "Lord, I hate buttermilk."

The pastor opened one eye and wondered where this was going. The deacon continued, "Lord, I hate lard." "Now the pastor was totally perplexed."

The deacon continued, "Lord, I aint too crazy about plain flour. But after you mix 'em all together and bake 'em in a hot oven, I just love biscuits."

"Lord help us to realize when life gets hard, when things come up that we don't like, whenever we don't understand what you are doing, that we need to wait and see what you are making. After you get through mixing and baking, it'll probably be something even better than biscuits. Amen."

Romans 8:28

What does Romans 8:28 say? *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

This is a picture of Joseph's life as we continue our study from Genesis 39. From what we saw last talk, and as we will see again this morning, at least in the eyes of a human observer, Joseph's fortunes wax and wane. For him, life was adversity followed by success followed by adversity, followed by success. The truth is though, it was all part of God's plan. Even tragedy is used by God to bring good – for those called according to his purpose. With that intro, let's look into it. . .

ADVERSITY: There was no "happy ending" to Joseph's sale into slavery

- This is not a Hallmark movie – no last minute rescue happened – Joseph, who had been the favorite son in a privileged family was now truly a slave. I've been thinking what it was like for Joseph, what was going through his mind as all this happened to him. I'm thinking he was pretty naïve and in his cluelessness he walked innocently into a truly devastating and completely life-altering experience. He went from happy-go-lucky to bondage just like that – and then off to Egypt – hundreds of miles from everything and everyone he knew. I can't imagine the confusion and utter fear.
- But, God was there. Joseph might have been a slave but God was with him. God was with him through the terror of the trip with the Midianite traders who took him to Egypt and as he became the property of a key official in Pharaoh's administration. It says that Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph. He gained favor in the eyes of anyone, except for his jealous brothers. We will see time and time again here in the life of Joseph that *"The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered.* It's key to the story.
- You see, people notice when God is with you. It's just the way it is. There is something different about a child of God. I'll be so bold as to ask, do people notice that God is with you? Does Jesus shine through your life? Just askin' . . .
- Despite adversity far beyond anything we can imagine, we have the same promise Joseph had, because of Christmas, as a matter of fact, Immanuel, God with us. God was present and he was very much at work providing a redemptive plan. Charles Fritsch writes in reference to Joseph here in Genesis 39: *"In the overruling providence of God the sorrows of life and the sins of wicked men are made to serve the divine purpose of redemptive grace."*
- And then we see . . .

SUCCESS: Integrity always works

- Joseph found favor for a good reason. He was a person of deep integrity. He could be relied upon. Anyone who came in contact with him soon saw this. At the beginning of today's chapter and again at the end of it, it is clearly pointed out that Joseph was one who could be trusted with great responsibility.

- It's interesting that this is the third message in a row that our scripture is emphasizing integrity. We talked about honesty in our final message from Galatians, and again last message we talked about how deceit was a part of the family culture is Joseph's family of origin. Now, here we are, in yet another chapter, seeing how, despite his life situation, Joseph was a person of incredible honesty, integrity, and reliability.
- Integrity always works because it stands out. Everyone notices it. Everyone desires it in their interaction with one another. Too often though, it's difficult to attain and retain. Not for Joseph. It was who he was. And he found out that, integrity or not, temptation still raises its ugly head. . .

ADVERSITY: Integrity does not necessarily prevent strife

- While Potiphar noticed Joseph's skills and integrity, his wife certainly noticed something else. She obviously had no scruples and sets out to make a conquest. She also seems to have been used to having her own way. This is in addition to the idea that a slave is to do the master's bidding. In this case Potiphar's wife no doubt thought it was completely in her rights to take this handsome slave to bed. It's very likely that she had done it before and, males being males, previous trysts had probably been with willing participants.
- Not so with Joseph. He was a man of God. Faithfulness is not to be reserved for those times when it's convenient or easy. Joseph knew what EVERY child of God knows, to give in to temptation is to let everyone down, God, family, employers, EVERYONE. Since integrity was a core value for him, and when he is put to the test, he prevails. He did not want to sin against God or his earthly master – his reply to the woman's seductive advances is priceless, *"With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"* Genesis 39:8-9
- Fritsch says that *"This is the first time in the record of Israel's history that a man deliberately sets obedience to God's laws above the gratification of his own passions."* Sadly, it's been too often through history since Joseph's day, that people of God, especially men of God, have been too weak to withstand such an invitation. While Joseph dealt with Potiphar's seductive wife, we modern men deal with the very real temptation of easy access to pornography that is just a few keystrokes away on a computer screen. F. B. Meyer writes of Joseph, *"When temptation and opportunity meet, our case is hard indeed. At such time only God's grace can hold us back."* Rely on God's grace. Remember whose you are so that when temptation comes we can ask ourselves, *"How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"*
- And then RUN!!! Get out of the situation. Learn from Joseph, notice how he got away – QUICK! The fact that the seductress only caught his cloak indicates the speed of his escape. No matter how fast he got away, it didn't prevent another vicious lie that would send Joseph into chains. Meredith Kline points out that for a second time, a coat of Joseph's was made for lie about him.
- You could say it was two steps forward and three steps back for Joseph. The poor guy couldn't catch a break. He does the right thing and gets buried for it. But this is what he knew, when you know God is with you, adversity can be endured because . . .

SUCCESS: Even in the "worst" situations obedience prevails

- His "crime" was actually a capital offence. Attempted rape – which he was accused of was usually a summary execution. Once again, however, God's hand can be seen here as Joseph is merely thrown into prison. Now, prison was, without a doubt, horrible. He might have been a slave before, but he had enjoyed great privilege as Potiphar's trusted servant. Now he was back in the dungeon. And the final verses of the text point out that, Joseph was a success EVEN IN PRISON!
- This is because faithfulness is far-reaching. Joseph is quickly seen for the exceedingly gifted man he was and elevated to a position of trust and authority – even in the prison. It is the story of his life, as one commentator puts it, *"Those who rule themselves will be presently trusted to rule others."*
- It's like this, Joseph was refined by difficulty and he knew that he simply needed to bloom where he was planted. That's all any of us can do. No matter what our situation, shine. Here's an idea, be a blessing where you work.

Conclusion: Once again, this is to be continued. But have you noticed a running theme through this chapter? GOD WAS WITH JOSEPH. Seven times in just verses 2-5 it says in one way or the other, the Lord was the cause of Joseph's success. Because of this:

1. Joseph became fabulously successful
2. The Lord blessed everything and everyone associated with Joseph
3. God kept faith with Joseph amid adversity.
4. Joseph easily won favor with important people.

But it isn't just in those beginning verses – it's all through this chapter, and in fact all through Joseph's life. If it was adversity he faced – God was with him and he remained faithful. And when success came his way, he didn't rest on his laurels and let his guard down. NO, he remained faithful. Know why? Because he knew God is faithful and will never leave or forsake his people.

Do you know that? Think about it. Amen.