

*Back in the early 70's Coach Ralph 'Shug' Jordan at Auburn University asked his former Linebacker Mike Kolen, who was playing for the Miami Dolphins, if he would help his alma mater do some recruiting.*

*Mike said, "Sure, coach. What kind of player are you looking for?"*

*The coach said, "Well Mike, you know that there's that fellow, you knock him down, he just stays down?"*

*Mike said, "We don't want him, do we coach?"*

*"No, that's right. Then there's that fellow, you knock him down and he gets up, you knock him down again and he stays down."*

*Mike said, "We don't want him either do we coach?"*

*Coach said, "No, but Mike, there's a fellow, you knock him down, he gets up. Knock him down, he gets up.*

*Knock him down, he gets up. Knock him down, he gets up."*

*Mike said, "That's the guy we want isn't it coach?"*

*The coach answered, "No, Mike, we don't want him either. I want you to find the guy who's knocking everybody down.*

*That's the guy we want."*

And we all want to be the guy who does the knocking down rather than the one who gets knocked down.

But life is not like football in this respect. No one always does the knocking down.

Everyone gets knocked down sooner or later. In fact football is not like football in this respect. No one always wins.

There are people who think that when God is with you... all is wonderful. With the Lord life is candy and nuts. But, no. In Genesis 39 we are going to be confronted with this most important question:

What does it mean when the Lord is with you?

We are going to discover that some things are what we would expect from the Lord.

Other things are going to force us to look at ourselves.

And still other things might surprise us... they're not what we'd expect from the Lord.

But, whatever you might expect, you don't get to pick out some things and not others.

In other words, if you want to live life with the Lord, you have to accept the blessings and the tests and the trials.

You don't get to pick out what you want. You take what God prescribes. Let's see how it works.

## **I. Joseph a slave in Egypt vs. 1**

Let us remember what has happened thus far in Joseph's life.

He was his father's favorite son. God showed him in dreams that he would eventually rule over his brothers and father.

So, the first answer to our question is this: When the Lord is with you He tells you that He has a plan and purpose in your life.

Joseph knew from the beginning that God was going to use him in a special way.

But, then things go very badly for Joseph. Life was great until his brothers, out of jealousy, sold him into slavery.

Now, all of a sudden life is horrible for Joseph. He is removed from family and home... far far from home.

He is a slave. Things don't get much worse than that.

## **II. "The Lord was with Joseph." vs. 2-6**

First let us talk about how God is referred to here.

"The Lord" = Yahweh. God's covenant name involving special love and faithfulness.

God's covenant name is used here for the first time since Gen. 31.

This is the name of God that reminds us that He is the God who makes and keeps promises.

The Lord has been with others who we have met in Genesis.

Adam before he sinned. The Lord walked with him in the garden.

There was Enoch who walked with God.

There was Noah to whom God showed grace and with whom God spoke. God saved him and his family..

There was Abraham to whom God bound Himself with a covenant promise...

and Isaac and Jacob who clung to that same promise.

This is the Lord who was with Joseph. This is a big deal. When this Lord is with you He transforms everything.

We are going to see just how.

"He became a successful man." (vs. 2) = God gives success to Joseph

This means he demonstrates intelligence, wisdom, skill, hard work, he earns the respect of others.

"his master saw that the Lord was with him" (vs. 3) = People notice the Lord is with you.

How would people see this? How would they know that it is the Lord doing these things and not just Joseph?

Well, it is probably because Joseph told them.

We would be right to think this because of how Joseph spoke to his brothers earlier and how he speaks to Pharaoh later.

**Gen. 41:16** Joseph likely told Potiphar, "It is not me, but my Lord who prospers me."

And, very likely, Potiphar saw Joseph honoring God in his life as the contemporaries of Daniel saw God honored.

No one who walks with God does so in secret. We want people to see that God is most important to us.

No doubt Potiphar saw that the Lord was with him because Joseph lived like the Lord was with him.

"the Lord caused all that he did to prosper" (vs. 3) = excellence

This is just like what the Lord did for Jacob when he was serving Laban.

God makes our efforts prosperous when He is with us... and when we are with Him.

And, ultimately, all prosperity comes from God.

Sometimes it is not what we are looking for. Sometimes it is not where we can see it.

But, if the Lord is with you He is causing your life and efforts to bear fruit for His purpose.

"Joseph found favor in his sight... and he made him overseer" (vss. 4-6) = favor with men, trust, responsibility

So, Joseph is promoted... personal success rewarded by others.

This doesn't happen all the time... but many times. Remember Daniel, Esther.

"thus the Lord's blessing was on all that he owned" = Blessing overflows to others.

And, so it is with us. When God blesses our lives He means for that blessing to overflow to others.

And, whether the blessing is material, emotional, or spiritual... we ought to be thankful, not jealous, because of this.

This is what it means to have the Lord with you.

All good so far.

### III. Joseph faithful to God vss. 7-12

So, the next thing we learn is this: If the Lord is with you temptation is going to seek you out... persistently.

She wants Joseph because he is handsome and successful. He is a trophy.

When you walk with God some people will see you this way. They will want to wreck your walk with God.

They will want you to join them in their sin because then they will feel better.

Or they will acquire something they think they want... but they'll never be satisfied.

You see this especially with sexual sin... which is a form of coveting. People want to feel like it's normal.

Drunkenness. People want to feel like it's a social event... not sin.

Cheating, gossip, grumbling, disobeying parents... people feel better... they feel safer. People want you to sin.

Satan certainly thinks this way about people who walk with God. **1 Peter 5:8**

Remember God's warning to Cain? **Gen. 4:7**

Next we can see from Joseph that when the Lord is with you you understand responsibility to others. Trustworthiness

Why? Because you understand the call of God and the stewardship He expects from His servants.

And because you know that God is always watching. You and I always live before Him.

So, real followers of God are fantastic employees. You can trust them.

Do you live your life always before God?

When the Lord is with you you understand the real nature of sin.

This is in obvious and direct contrast to Judah's moral failure in Gen. 38.

How did Joseph get this way? The Lord was with Him.

This much is clear from the text: Joseph's morality flowed directly from his understanding of God's will and presence.

He understood that sin is an offence against God. All sin is that.

vs. 9 "How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" This is what concerns him. God's presence is on his mind.

This is what is missing in the guy who goes off to college and parties and ends up living with his girlfriend.

This is what is missing in the man on the business trip do things he would never do at home.

This is what is missing in the girl who acts Christian at church but sleeps with her boyfriend.

These people all don't really believe that God is really there. They have a little itty bitty view of God.

Joseph thought of God as always there, always watching... caring how we live. This is who God really is.

Prov. 5-7 is one extensive warning to us regarding the dangers of sexual sin.

Is it the worst kind of sin? No. Is it unforgivable? No. But it involves our whole person in a way that no other sin does.

When the Lord is with you you take steps to avoid temptation.

Luke 22: 40, 46 "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

Part of the Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

**2 Peter 2:9** God knows how to rescue you... but you need to listen to Him.

**1 Cor. 10:13** There is a way out.

But, you can't just sit around and hope God will rescue you. You are part of the rescue plan.

Joseph strategized and planned... "not to listen to her... or be with her."

He tried to eliminate the temptation.

Is there someone who is tempting you? A "friend?" Maybe a woman you work with?

Don't be around that person.

Remember the previous chapter and how Judah hung out with the Adullamite? It did him no good at all.

When temptation (esp. sexual temptation) is staring you in the face you flee.

She finally catches Joseph in a situation he cannot avoid. So, he doesn't linger.

He doesn't let himself hang around. He runs. It is a good strategy... one that we ought to all remember.

When the temptation you are trying to avoid, the thing that scares you, that could ruin your life, shows up. Get out. It works. The temptation is gone. So is his robe. Awkward. Avoiding temptation is usually awkward. But, Joseph successfully remains faithful to the Lord. That is what matters.

So, now for the second time, Joseph is in trouble without his robe. Be careful when you put on your best clothes. If the Lord is with you, you just might lose your shirt... twice.

#### **IV. Joseph in trouble vss. 13-20**

Now we discover that when the Lord is with you you're going to be slandered.

Why does Potiphar's wife call the whole household? Why does she show them Joseph's robe? She wants to slander Joseph.

Why does she tell say "He (Potiphar) has brought in a Hebrew to make sport of us?" She is blaming her husband. She is playing on their jealousy and their racism.

Is it fair? No. Is it just? No.

But this is just the sorts of injustice that you will receive when you follow the Lord.

People will use any and all sorts of things to slander you.

When the Lord is with you you are going to suffer injustice. Joseph ends up in prison.

This is always the way it is with the people of God. Think of the prophets. Think of Daniel and his friends.

Consider Jesus. Consider the disciples... Stephen, James, Peter, Paul, John... all of them.

Now, for Joseph it could have been even worse. He could have been executed. But, prison is bad.

When the Lord is with you all your trials are used by God for His purposes. *Carmen Howard, "God doesn't waste our trials."*

**James 1:2-4** Consider it Joy? Why? Because of what trials are for.

**1 Peter 1:3-8** We see this attitude in Joseph... not a word of complaint. Just continued faithfulness.

Why? It is because Joseph knows that the Lord is with him. And, when the Lord is with you He has a purpose for everything.

Well, you might ask, what could God's purpose be in all this? Joseph doesn't know.

We never know when we're in the midst of trials. We don't know what God's purpose is. But He has a purpose.

We do know God's purpose in Joseph's life. We know because we know the rest of the story.

God wants Joseph in prison so that he can meet the Pharaoh's cupbearer and eventually be summoned to Pharaoh's court.

There he will eventually be put in charge of all Egypt as Pharaoh's Prime Minister.

And, finally he will be used to save his own family from famine.

But Joseph does not know any of this at this point.

But he knows the God who knows. And, that's enough.

It is enough for us as well.

So, when the Lord is with you you will get into trouble.

But, think about it. Who would you rather be in trouble with? God or men? ...or women?

How you answer that in your heart essentially tells you whether or not you really believe in the Lord.

Do you really live like He's there?

Now Joseph is in prison. Things look very bad again.

Up. Down. Up. Down. Life is like that for everyone.

But, with Joseph something more significant is going on.

#### **V. "The Lord was with Joseph." vss. 21-23**

Notice the first words we read in this final section.

We are meant to be reminded of what we heard in vs. 2 when we were told of Joseph's slavery.

It is at the lowest points that we are reminded that "the Lord was with Joseph."

It is the most important fact about his life... and, if you know the Lord, it is the most important fact about yours.

And, now again, we see all of those things that we saw in Joseph back when he was in Potiphar's house.

There he was working as a household servant... comfortable but not lofty.

Now he is in a very low place indeed... but he's the same man and the Lord is still with Him.

And, so we see his trustworthiness, character, success, and the jailor puts him in charge of everything.

When the Lord is with you it doesn't matter what situation you are in, God can use you and bless you and others.

So, we see finally that when the Lord is with you He stays with you always.

He never left Joseph, even though it may have seemed like God was gone for a while.

The Lord says in Heb. 12:5, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

So, when the Lord is with you, you will get knocked down.

There will be successes. But there will be trials.

You will struggle. There will be temptations, oppositions. You might even fail.

But God pulls you back up again.

When the Lord is with you, you realize that everything He does in your life has a purpose and is part of His plan.