
Joseph, Part 2

Genesis 37, 39-45

Prosperous

Genesis 39:2, 3, 23

The root means to accomplish satisfactorily what is intended.

2 Chronicles 26:5

Joshua 1:8

Psalms 1:3

2 Chronicles 26:5

Prosperous

It often appears that the wicked prosper.

Jeremiah 12:1

The little horn prospers.

Daniel 8:12, 24

But this success is only temporary.

Daniel 11:36

Transgression of God's law will never succeed.

Numbers 14:41

Psalms 37:7-11

Psalms 37:13-17

Psalms 1:4-6

Joseph was prosperous because . . .

He did all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). His prosperity involved divine intervention, but Joseph had a part to play. He did his work well, with meticulous care and with a conscientious interest in Potiphar's welfare. This brought the blessing of heaven upon what he did, to the point that even Potiphar "saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand" (Genesis 39:3). He also honored the law of God. When Potiphar's wife tempted him, he responded with how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.

God prospers us in many ways. It may not necessarily be financially; it may be with wisdom, talents, and with spiritual understanding. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is another evidence. This fruit prospers us and fits us for God's service. When God prospers a person, he remakes him or her into a new creature. This is prosperity of the highest order, and Joseph was truly prospered under the hand of God.

But no one can be under the hand of God's prosperity without facing great danger. Those who stand in the world's high places, as Joseph did, face temptations that others do not. Joseph bore both the test of adversity as a slave and a prisoner and the test of prosperity when in Potiphar's house and when in Egypt as a leader. The **same fidelity** to God was manifest in both the highs and the lows of his life.

He had been taught in his childhood to love and fear God. We can envision his father telling him over and over the story of the night vision of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it and with the LORD standing above it. Most likely Joseph had also been told many times of the night his father spent wrestling with a supposed adversary but had actually seen God face to face and how his name had been changed. Joseph also had been given his own mysterious dreams about his future that gave him assurance God was directing in his life.

Do we have such assurance?

I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

(Psalm 37:25-28)

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
(Hebrews 13:5)

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:20)

But thou, Israel, *art* my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. *Thou* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou *art* my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. (Isaiah 41:8-10)

Joseph grew up a shepherd boy and lived a simple life in the midst of nature which favored the development of both physical and mental powers, which, in turn, helped to form within him strength of mind and firmness of principle.

When the crisis of his life came at age seventeen and he was torn from his childhood home and taken as a captive to Egypt, the lessons his father had taught him about God helped him to be true and faithful to the God during his adversity and during his prosperity.

Through it all, Joseph was steadfast. Though surrounded by heathen worship, though faced with the attractions of wealth and the pomp of royalty, and though in the midst of vice while in prison, he was faithful to God. In all walks of life, from the most lowly to the most exalted, he was obedient to the requirements of God.

When he was called to the court of Pharaoh, Egypt was the greatest of nations. In civilization, art, and learning it was unequalled. Through difficulty and danger, Joseph administered the affairs of the kingdom in a manner that won the confidence of the king. Pharaoh "made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom" Psalm 105:21, 22.

What was the secret of Joseph's life of integrity? We read about it in Jacob's blessing recorded in Genesis 49:22-26.

Lessons To Remember

Life is uncertain, and we cannot know what a day will bring. Joseph set out on an errand fully expecting to return home.

Joseph's life teaches us that our lives are in God's hands, and we need to trust God to be with us and to work all things out, just as he did. Nothing happens to any of us except as God permits.

Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. (Proverbs 27:1).

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34)

The story of Joseph also teaches us how sin multiplies itself. The brothers were first envious and angry, then cruel and murderous. One sin does not stop with being one sin. It leads to another and then to still another. In Joseph's case, envy became the contemplation of murder, and the sale of their brother into slavery led to falsehood and long years of deception.

Another lesson we can learn is how we can unknowingly work together with God to accomplish his purposes. Reuben thought it was his idea that Joseph should not be killed but be put into a pit. Judah thought it was his idea that Joseph be sold to the Ishmaelites. The brothers' malice, hatred, and deadly animosity were their own choices, but the God of heaven took the whole complicated situation of their envy, jealousy, cruelty, callousness, and hatred and made it come out to his own purpose and for all things to work together for good.

Also, we cannot rid ourselves of our responsibilities by putting them out of sight. The brothers thought that when they sold Joseph into slavery their problems were over with him.

Also, it is often best we do not know our individual futures. Would Joseph have willingly gone into slavery? Into prison? Would you? Maybe not. God knows it is most often better we do not know the details of our future, for if we did, we might try to avoid the path which God knows is best for us.

Another thought—when people are treated unjustly or with cruelty, their reactions reveal their true characters.

They may become morose and surrender to hopelessness, or they may vent and angrily denounce others. They may seek revenge or become cynical, spiteful, and unable to see good in anyone or anything, but Joseph did not respond in any of these ways.

His convictions and his confidence in God saved him from reacting in an ungodly manner about what was happening to him. His wholesome nature, as well as the daily blessings of God, enabled him to meet his troubles with patience, to resist the influences that would drive him to despair, and preserved him from every sort of morbid attitude.

The Bible says the LORD was with Joseph (Genesis 39:2, 21). Joseph was actually better off in Egypt, as a slave, than his brothers were at home because they continued to deceive their father; whereas, Joseph had God's blessing even though he was in harsh circumstances.

We have characters to form, and God places us in positions that will develop nobility of character, perfect patience, and entire trust in our Saviour. Reverses, affliction, and severe trials are allowed by God to refine us as gold so that we may offer to the him an offering of our lives in righteousness.

Closing Thoughts

Joseph could not be persuaded to deviate from the path of righteousness and trample upon God's law. He had a defense in God, and so do we. God is always a present help. David understood this:

God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. (Psalm 46:1-3)

Because of God's abiding presence and power, Joseph was cheerful though imprisoned. God had been with his father when alone and far from home due to his own sinful actions. Joseph was in a similar situation, except he was innocent and falsely accused. Surely God would be with him. Joseph's faith led him to be at peace and even positive in his cruel prison cell. Looking back on it he could see his imprisonment was, in fact, part of God's great plan, for here it was that he met Pharaoh's butler and baker!

May we remember the example of Joseph as we meet the trials and temptations of each day. They are all part of God's great plan to develop our characters. May we all be faithful as was Joseph!

As the mountains *are* round about
Jerusalem, so the Lord *is* round about
his people from henceforth even for
ever. (Psalm 125:2)

Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on thee: because
he trusteth in thee. (Isaiah 26:3)

Great peace have they which love thy
law: and nothing shall offend them.
(Psalm 119:165)

But they that wait upon the Lord shall
renew *their* strength; they shall mount
up with wings as eagles; they shall run,
and not be weary; *and* they shall walk,
and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)