

020 Joseph Becomes a Slave

MEMORY VERSE: "The Lord was with Joseph." Genesis 39:2

SCRIPTURES: Genesis 39 and 40

AIM: God protected and prospered Joseph through very hard trials.

Joseph was alone and friendless in a foreign land. When the traders arrived in Egypt he was sold to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard.

Joseph, who but a few days before had enjoyed everything he wanted in his father's house, was now a slave. It must have been very hard for Joseph. But, God was with him. In fact, God's presence was so obvious, Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph.

Because Potiphar could tell that God was making Joseph successful in everything he did, Potiphar made Joseph the "overseer" or "boss" of his house and estate. This was a big promotion for a slave, and Joseph was very happy about it.

All went well until Potiphar's wife began to cause trouble. She tried to get Joseph to do something very wrong. But Joseph refused. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" he said.

Potiphar's wife was furious. Seeking revenge she told her husband lies about Joseph. Potiphar ordered Joseph to be taken to prison.

Poor Joseph. He had done nothing wrong. How hard it is to be misjudged! Yet Joseph would not let himself despair, for God was still with him, and gave him favor in the eyes of the jailer!

One day, two new prisoners arrived. One was the king's wine-steward and the other the king's chief baker. Somehow they had displeased the king and he had put them in jail.

One night they both had a dream. In the morning when Joseph saw them he asked, "What is the matter? Why do you both look so miserable?"

They answered, "We had disturbing dreams, but don't understand what they meant"

Joseph told them, "The Lord God knows the meaning. Tell me your dreams."

The chief butler said, "In my dream, I saw a grapevine in front of me. It had three branches. It was full of lovely clusters of ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand. I took the grapes and squeezed the juice into Pharaoh's cup and gave it to him. What does my dream mean?"

"This is what it means," Joseph replied. "The three branches mean three days. Three days from now Pharaoh will release you from this prison and you will again be serving the king."

The chief baker was encouraged when he heard the meaning of the chief butler's dream, so he told his dream to Joseph.

"In my dream there were three baskets resting on my head. The top basket was full of bread and cakes that I had baked for Pharaoh. But the birds were flying down and eating from the basket. What does my dream mean?"

"It means," answered Joseph sadly, "that in three days Pharaoh will take you out of prison. You will be put to death."

Everything happened as Joseph had said.

Pharaoh's birthday came three days later and he held a party for all of his officials and household staff. He sent for his chief butler and chief baker and they were brought to him from prison. He restored the chief butler to his former position but he sentenced the chief baker to be hanged.

When the butler left prison, Joseph asked for his help. "Please don't forget me," he pleaded. "Tell the king that I have done no wrong and I do not deserve to be in prison."

The butler went back to his work and forgot all about asking Pharaoh to free Joseph. He had to stay in prison another two years. But God did not forget about Joseph.