

# Joseph prospers in prison

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Preacher: Rev W.Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Scripture which we read, book of Genesis chapter 39 and verse 23, the last verse of the chapter. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him, with Joseph, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

Joseph is portrayed for us in the scriptures as a real man of God. He's one of the few spotless characters that we have in the Bible.

We're told in the Bible about many great men of God, but almost every one of them has some great sin in their lives.

You remember Noah, that fine man of God, and yet Noah was guilty on one occasion of drunkenness.

You remember Lot, who vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the Sodomites.

[ 1 : 20 ] Lot is portrayed for us as one who was worldly. Abraham, the father of the faithful, he told a lie.

He said that Sarah was his sister when she was his wife. You remember David. David committed adultery and then committed murder to cover up his adultery.

You remember Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived. And he married some heathen women and went astray after their false gods with them.

You remember Peter, so forthright in following Christ. Peter denied his Lord three times.

Mark, who wrote that lovely gospel. He was finding a way hard with Paul and Barnabas, and so he turned back because of the persecutions and difficulties in the missionary journey.

[ 2 : 22 ] Remember Barnabas himself, that son of consolation, that man of peace, how he fell out with the apostle Paul.

But here's Joseph. We're told a lot about Joseph. But we're not told anything bad about him.

He was just 17 years old when he left home. And yet he never forgets his father's house or his father's God. That's amazing in itself.

He had no Bible in his pocket. He had no minister or church to go to. No Christian friends to associate with. Nobody to advise him.

At the age of 17, he left home. And he left home in a sad way. His brothers, who were also men of God, his brothers, sold him to be a slave.

[ 3 : 26 ] And despite all his pleas and cries to them, to be merciful towards him, they took the 20 pieces of silver and sat down and had a feast, quite glad to be rid of Joseph.

You would expect Joseph to be extremely bitter. bitter towards God and bitter towards his brethren.

But no. How was Joseph enabled to be such a steadfast man of God alone in the land of Egypt?

There's only one answer.

Grace. Saving grace. Persevering grace. Grace. In this world that is full of temptations.

In this world where there are so many difficulties and problems and obstacles and trials. In this world where it is so easy to backslide and to make a mess of things.

[ 4 : 32 ] How can we keep on going and end up in heaven? Grace. My grace is efficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness.

The grace which kept Joseph is available for you and me. No. It's not just available for you and me.

But the grace which kept Joseph will keep you and me and everyone who puts their trust in Jesus. kept by the power of God through faith and to salvation. We don't keep ourselves.

We can't. But he keeps us. So first of all I would like us to notice how grace makes a slave to prosper.

Grace makes Joseph prosper. Joseph had been given a position of prominence above his brothers. He was his father's favourite.

[ 5 : 45 ] Now we often hear people condemning Jacob for making a favourite of Joseph. Joseph. But Joseph was God's favourite too.

Joseph was special. You remember how God gave to Joseph two dreams. And in one dream he was out in the field reaping with his brethren.

And his sheaves stood up and the eleven sheaves of his brethren bowed down before him. Joseph was God's favourite. And you remember how Joseph saw another dream of the sun, the moon and the eleven stars bowing down to him.

Even his father found that one hard to swallow. His father and his mother and his eleven brothers bowing down to him. But that was God's revelation to Joseph.

And that was something that happened. Joseph was special. Why was he special? Because God made him special. And why is anyone special?

[ 6 : 56 ] And why is anyone successful? See me. See what I've done. See how gifted I am. See how clever I am. How successful I am. Oh what a fool. Puny little man.

No. See God. God lifts the beggar from the jungle and makes him into a prince. God who takes the thing which is nothing and makes it into something.

Let no man boast. There is no room for boasting. But we must rejoice in God. The great God and the God who has made us great.

Joseph was Jacob's favourite and rightly so. He was special. God had made him special. God had given to him special grace.

And so the coat of many colours that Joseph was given was but an acknowledgement of the special place that God had given to Joseph in that family.

[ 8 : 03 ] But the brothers were jealous of him. That's so natural isn't it? Jealousy. When you see somebody getting on you're jealous. And when you see somebody holier than you you're jealous.

At least that's the sin the temptation. We're not always jealous and we shouldn't always be jealous. By grace we are enabled to overcome temptations such as jealousy.

And we should rejoice when we see holy people and we should love them with all our heart. But the brothers were jealous and they sold Joseph into Egypt.

Now Joseph knew what it was to be the son of a wealthy father to live in prosperity to have everything that he needed and wished for but he lost it all.

he ended up in poverty. The coat of many colors that he had was pulled off him and he was sold naked a slave into Egypt.

[ 9 : 21 ] Imagine the son of wealthy Jacob standing there in the slave market of Egypt along with other slaves naked people looking at him wondering how much they would pay for him.

One person offering this amount another offering that amount and eventually Potiphar buying him. He had lost his wealth he had lost his prosperity he had lost his comfort he had lost so much but one thing he didn't lose he didn't lose God God still loved him God cared for him and God had his great secret purpose for Joseph and so Joseph is brought by Potiphar comes into his house and starts working as a slave and we're told that he prospers why does he prosper is it because he is such an honest person such a hardworking man is it because he is so good living well all these things are right and proper in themselves but that's not the reason why he prospered we are told that he prospered because the Lord was with him verse 3 and his master saw saw something special that the

Lord was with him saw the evidence of it and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand even if we are slaves we can prosper through God God be with us in America there's the prosperity gospel the idea that you believe in God and everything will work out well for you become a Christian your business will prosper your marriage will prosper your health will prosper everything will prosper you'll have an easy time of it and all things will work out well for you if you become a Christian that's the teaching of some especially these telling evangelists but what happened to Joseph he was a godly man and he ended up a slave but that wasn't the full end of the story there is a sense and yes in which you will prosper if you trust in

God but you've got to look in the longer term you've got to look at it in the full picture Joseph in order to reach his full prosperity he had first to fall to become a slave and then eventually became governor of Egypt and so you and I might have to go through poverty and suffering and trouble and

trial but one day we will have an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away we served in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith and to salvation serve God and you will be rich in eternal terms yes but not in earthly and temporal terms some of us it wouldn't be good for us if the

Lord made us wealthy wealth could be a temptation to us and could lead to degeneracy within our Christianity some of us are better Christians in poverty than in riches God knows what is best for us and God gives us what is best whatever Joseph did he prospered in his master noticed this and so Potiphar made him overseer of his house and when that happened Potiphar's house prospered and Potiphar's fields and farm prospered and so he left everything in Joseph's hand and great success came to Potiphar and his house now that was very strange when you remember that Joseph was just 17 years old when he entered Potiphar's house just a boy and yet this boy was made manager of this noble man's house that was amazing and when you consider that Joseph would be struggling with the language of Egypt trying to understand it trying to grasp it struggling with the language struggling with the culture struggling with his own homesickness struggling trying to cope with the awful thing that had happened to him sold by his brothers cast out of his own home by his loved ones when he was trying to show kindness and love to them and now a slave and yet he was successful you see

[15:02] God can make you a success even when everything seems to be against you and the whole world seems to be on the opposite side God can make you a success and God will make you a success and every one of God's children will enjoy success you must remember this trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding trust ye in the Lord forever for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength prosperity is something that God gives God gave it to Joseph and God will give it to us grace makes the slave to prosper and grace will make us to prosper too do you have grace what is grace grace is Christ do you have Christ in your heart do you have him as your saviour if you don't you're a poor beggar but if you have Christ you're wealthy so that's the first thing we notice how

Joseph got on so well grace made him prosper the second thing is that grace enables him to resist a terrible temptation Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph now that must have been very difficult for young Joseph it would have been very gratifying to his pride here was a woman not just a servant's wife but the wife of one of the chief men of Egypt it would be gratifying for a slave would it not that this woman was showing such interest in him gratifying to his pride and there's pride in every one of us and pride is something that we find it very difficult to overcome that feeling of our own importance that feeling that we're special that we're something that we're so wise or so sensible or so clever that we don't do this and we don't do that and we're a little bit a little bit special so the temptation would gratify his pride and then the temptation of

Potiphar's wife was particularly strong I am sure because of the loneliness of Joseph there in Egypt Joseph you remember was someone who had lost his mother at a very young age and now he had been forcibly separated from the father who loved him and his brothers had shown terrible hatred towards him and here he is in the land of Egypt no other Hebrew no other Christian around no one to whom he could relate with whom he could share who had the same sort of background and experiences a captive in a foreign land loneliness he must have felt lonely and here was this woman who was offering herself to him it must have been a temptation in his loneliness and then further it must have been a temptation because yielding to it could lead to further favors here was a woman who could give him many a thing who could do much for him her master's wife it must have been a temptation to yield to her there he was a slave in this house with no rights and yet this temptation and then the temptation would be strong because it could easily be covered up there were times when he was alone in the house with his master's wife it could be easily hidden ah yes but God sees so important for the

Christian is it not to remember that you can hide your sins from everyone else but the eye of God follows us wherever we go into every dark corner into every secret sin the eye of the Lord is there it must have been difficult for Joseph to refuse to from this angle that it would hurt his master's wife it would hurt her if he refused and it could lead to trouble it would offend her not yielding to her desire she was his master's wife she was his boss she was the one who was really in control of him as a slave he had no rights it must have been very difficult for him to refuse he knew what trouble she could bring upon him and what trouble she did bring upon him how he ended up in prison and yet he refused the temptation and then further the temptation was difficult because of the persistence of

it if it was just a one off thing well you could resist that yes but day after day she kept tempting him day after day she sought to lead him astray now that must have been very difficult it's one thing to resist a temptation once but to resist it day after day after day and then further eventually it came to the point where on this day she actually grabbed him how difficult it must have been to resist the temptation there was so much pressure so much seduction so much you might say of common sense that would say to him yield to it how could this young lad resist there he was in this foreign land there he was in this vulnerable situation there he was with this woman who very likely was extremely attractive the flesh in him would say yield to her the devil was saying to him yield to her the woman was saying yield to me how did he resist the temptation grace grace is the secret God's grace God's restraining grace you and I have our temptations too we might be very different from the temptation to which Joseph was subject perhaps perhaps it's a temptation to drink and you find it so difficult to resist and yet God can enable you to resist maybe it's a temptation to bad temper and you say how can I stop it's just me it's so natural for me I'm in situations where I just blow up and I cannot control myself grace can enable you perhaps it's worldliness the cares of the world and the things of the world and the world comes in upon you and you find it so difficult in the midst of the busyness of life and all the pressures to retain your love for God and not to be submerged by the world how can you survive my grace is sufficient for you my strength is made perfect in weakness by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of [ 24 : 16 ] God beware of self-confidence self-confidence is the first step to sin self-reliance it's hopeless but if you trust in the Lord then you're mighty last Wednesday night down in Edinburgh we had some difficult decisions to take and I was very conscious of feeling a sense of weakness and frailty and the difficulty of the situation and the difficulties that confronted our church and then I looked up and in the room where we were made the presbytery hall of the college there's some verses two or three verses written along the roof of the church the ceiling of the church of the presbytery hall and one of the verses that was there was the verse without me you can do nothing and I found a great blessing in just looking at that verse and thinking about it without me you can do nothing why should we try to do anything without him anything we try to do it will be a failure anyway so look to me says the

Lord without me you can do nothing but then there's the other side of it with me you can do everything why should we be afraid why should we worry or be troubled why should we be perplexed or downhearted through my God assisting me I overleap a wall I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me without me you can do nothing oh that we would have faith trust dependence and the Lord he will work out everything for us if only we would trust rely upon the Lord rely upon him and he will make you as strong as a lion rely upon him and you will overcome every difficulty and problem maybe you're saying to yourself I couldn't become a Christian I couldn't keep it up

I couldn't resist this temptation that temptation I couldn't stop this or that I couldn't stop drinking I couldn't stop whatever it might be think of Joseph how amazingly he resisted temptation it wasn't the secret strength of a 17 year old boy it wasn't some great resistance that he had in him because he was some superman Joseph resisted temptation because God gave him the grace too and God can give the grace to you too and by grace you can be mighty and you can defy Satan and you can defy every temptation you can do all things by grace through through the help the strength the favor the encouragement of God finally grace exalts

Joseph in prison grace makes the slave to prosper grace enables the slave to resist a terrible temptation and grace exalts the slave in prison Joseph's master naturally believes his wife and she's furious and he is furious with Joseph and puts Joseph into prison actually the prison was in the captain of the guard's house in his own house chapter 40 and verse 3 tells us that so the captain of the guard Potiphar was the man who was in charge of the prison the prison of Egypt the king's prison so Joseph is there put in prison but God doesn't forsake him Joseph's prosperity is gone once again so it seems he has been witnessing to the truth he has been standing for the Lord and everything seems to have gone against him like the Lord Jesus Christ he is suffering for his faithfulness he is suffering false accusations against him you can imagine Joseph saying to himself why am I in this mess where are you Lord why is everything going wrong I've tried to keep your commandments I've tried to do what is right Lord I'm trying to serve you and I end up sold as a slave into Egypt I tried to serve you as a slave and I'm thrown into prison with false accusations yet

[ 29 : 58 ] God was with him grace was sustaining him and we're told the keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand because the Lord was with him and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper and so the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison and whatever they did there he was the doer of it and so eventually Joseph finds himself in charge of the prison it's amazing how he's knocked down time and again and yet he rises up when I fall I shall arise again when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me that's the child of God many knocks many blows often cast down but every time rising up again when I fall I shall arise again when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me and so

Joseph is exalted in the prison be faithful to God keep his commandments trust in his grace and you will ride out every storm whatever false accusations might be laid against you doesn't matter whatever rumors doesn't matter whatever troubles or difficulties doesn't matter God is the rock of my salvation God is my refuge and my strength God in the midst of her to dwell nothing shall her remove grace do you have grace or are you a stranger to grace and to God it's a wonderful thing to have grace and amazingly

God is offering you grace today come to him and he will give you grace let us pray gracious and ever blessed God grant unto us thy grace we praise thy name for the way that thou hast given us grace in times past we praise thee for thy sustaining grace thy restraining grace we bless thee lord for persevering grace we we praise thy name for all the favor the unmerited favor that thou hast shown to us in thy grace bless us each one bless those who are strangers to grace lord we pray that even today thou wouldst touch the heart of one here to seek thy grace for themselves and not to give up seeking till they find and grant that we would all of us know thy saving grace in our lives for

Jesus sake Amen