

Joseph, An Example To Youth

Introduction. We live in an age of "enlightenment." It is a secular age, a time when the faith of old and young is severely tried. It is an age of the skeptic where the faith of many is destroyed in colleges and universities. It is also an age of permissiveness where so many sins are ignored or tolerated.

In such an age the young need someone to be a role model; someone who is their contemporary. There are many such characters in the scriptures. Timothy was "well reported of by the brethren" (Acts 16:2). Paul said, "For I have no man likeminded" and "Ye know the proof of him..." (Philippians 2:20, 22). His faith was described as "unfeigned..." (2 Timothy 1:5).

Joseph is a good example. The sons of Jacob were rough and lawless, without any concern for their father's wishes or aims. On the other hand, Joseph seems to have united some of the best characteristics of his ancestors. Like Abraham, he was strong, decided and prudent; like Isaac, gentle and patient; like Jacob, warmhearted and affectionate. We are going to look at Joseph because of his many trials and his constant example of one who lived and overcame.

I. ***The History Of Joseph***

A. Joseph in Canaan.

1. He was the son of Jacob and Rachel.
2. His father's grievous mistake was in loving him more than his brothers.
3. Joseph's dreams foreshadowed his future life.
4. Joseph's dreams caused his brothers' enmity and hatred.
5. They intended to kill Joseph but Reuben spared his life.
6. Joseph was sold to Midianite merchants.

B. Joseph in Egypt.

1. In Potiphar's house, he was tempted but he rebuffed it.
2. He was cast in prison because of false accusations.
3. Joseph was able to interpret the butler's and the baker's dreams.
4. Joseph stood before Pharaoh.
5. He finally met his brethren.
6. The family was reunited.

II. ***Lessons From Joseph***

A. He did not allow circumstances to make him bitter.

1. There were some things he had no way of knowing which might have made him bitter, or more so. He did not know Reuben intended to release him, he did not know the lie his brethren told his

- father and he did not know his father believed him to be dead.
2. He had been wrongly treated, but he did not allow that to keep him from doing what he ought to do.
 - a) He suffered at the hands of his brothers.
 - b) He was the victim of a vicious lie.
 - c) Those whom he helped promptly forget about his kindness.
 3. Still, he obviously followed the adage, "If life hands you a lemon, make lemonade" (Ephesians 4:31; Hebrews 12:15; James 3:14).
- B. He had no spirit of revenge, but was willing to forgive.
1. Vengeance belongs to the Lord (Romans 12:19-21).
 2. Jesus wanted us to not retaliate, but forgive (Matthew 5:38-42; 6:14-15).
- C. He was dependable and was not willing to betray the trust of his master.
1. He acted in such a way that his master trusted him with all he had (Genesis 39:6).
 2. He would not take advantage of his master (Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-25).
- D. He resisted temptation when it would have been so easy to succumb.
1. Fornication is an old sin.
 - a) Many want to "sow their wild oats."
 - b) However, this course of action can bring great amounts of pain to someone's life.
 2. Thus we are urged to do right and abstain from sin.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.
 - b) 1 Thessalonians 4:3.
 - c) Titus 2:6-8.
 - d) 1 Peter 2:11.
- E. He maintained his faith in God in the face of all adversities.
1. It is nowhere hinted that he blamed God for his trials (1 Peter 1:6-9).
 2. He realized that to succumb to fornication would be a sin against God (Genesis 39:9).
 3. He believed in God's power to reveal truth (Genesis 40:12; John 17:17).
 4. He credited God with his comfort and blessing.
 - a) Manasseh -- "God hath made me forget" (Genesis 41:51).
 - b) Ephraim -- "God hath caused me to be fruitful" (Genesis 41:52).
 5. He realized that God had used his trials to benefit his family.
 - a) Genesis 45:5.
 - b) Genesis 50:20.
 6. He confidently believed God would fulfill His promises to Abraham (Genesis 50:24).

- F. God ultimately rewards those who faithfully serve Him.
1. Ecclesiastes 8:12.
 2. Galatians 6:9.
 3. James 3:18.
 4. 2 Timothy 4:7.

Conclusion. Timothy was told, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Joseph was full of honors in Egypt. Yet his last act was to disown Egypt and choose the lot of Israel -- poverty, contempt and pilgrimage. He renounced the present in order to cleave to the future. Thus Joseph, being dead, yet spoke to Israel, telling them that they were only temporary sojourners in Egypt, and that in patience of faith they must wait for that hour when God would graciously fulfill His own promise. What a great example he makes for us all!