

A Study of the life of Joseph (3)
The providence of God
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Introduction: We always need to remember that we cannot see as God does concerning the events of this life.

- A. Consider the awesome knowledge and power of our eternal God. **(Psa 139:1-8)**
 - 1. God knows the future! **(Isa 46:9-10)**
 - 2. God's awesome power will be used to protect His people. **(Psa 121:7-8; 2 Tim 4:18)**
- B. How does man see?
 - 1. Because of our limits we can only see things "under the sun."
 - 2. What seems as a very long time to us is nothing to God. **(2 Pt 3:8-9)**
 - 3. Above all we cannot know the purposes and plans of God. What we view as a tragedy may be a victory!
 - 4. Be careful what you judge by sight! **(2 Cor 6:4-10)**

Discussion: How should we view adversity in our lives?

- 1. How can something bad be made to work for good by the Lord? **(Rom 8:28)**
- 2. Why do we need to be reminded of the promises of God during difficult times?
- 3. What is wrong when we conclude that the sufferings of a person must be because they are not right with God?

I. Even in adversity Joseph could see the providence of God

- A. What do we mean by the "providence of God?"
 - 1. Providence is not:
 - a. A Miracle - "a deed which is impossible to forces ordinarily in that order. God's miracles are for a purpose. One need not guess if a miracle has occurred. (Mark 16:17-20)
 - b. The actions of men alone.
 - 2. Consider the English word and its origin: Latin - "providentia" from "providere" - to provide. Etymologically: "pro" - before; "videre" - to see.
 - 3. The word means then "to see before". It expresses forethought and foresight.
 - 4. In the King James version the word is found in Acts 24:2.
 - 5. There are two Greek words that express the concept of providence.
 - a. The verb Pronoeo - Used three times and is translated "have regard for" and "take thought". **(Rom 12:17; 2 Cor 8:21; 1 Tim 5:8)**
 - b. The noun pronouia - translated "forethought, care, provision for something." **(Acts 24:2; Rom 13:14)**
 - c. When applied to God providence means: "His foresight and forethought in creating the universe whereby He would be in control and could carry out his purpose to its ultimate consummation."
- B. Consider the fact of God's providence in Joseph's life.

1. After becoming a slave God took care of him. **(Gen 39:2-4)**
 - a. How important is our position in life? What really does matter?
 - b. Even a pagan could see the providence of God!
2. After being thrown into prison God took care of him. **(Gen 39:21-23)**
 - a. What appeared to be a setback was only a change of position. Did any of this change his relationship with God for the bad?
 - b. Another pagan could see the providence of God!
3. There was also a miraculous element in the raising up of Joseph when he interpreted the king's dream. **(Gen 41:38)**
 - a. This occurred however after what appeared to be terrible setbacks. **(Gen 40:23-41:1)**
 - b. Even without the miraculous element we can see the providence of God working. Why did the butler remember?
4. Joseph recognized his whole experience to be the working of God. **(Gen 45:5-7; 50:20; Psa 105:17)**
 - a. We too have the promise that God is "with us." **(Matt 28:19-20; Heb 13:5-6)**
 - b. We need to be humble and not arrogant. There is always a question about the specifics of God's providence. **(Philemon 1:15)**

Discussion: Does the providence of God work today?

1. Who has the promises of God's providence?
2. How can I know that God has provided?
3. What attitudes can hinder us from seeing the provisions of God?
4. What are some common mistakes people make when considering the providence of God? (Ex. Job)

II. Joseph was raised to freedom and power by God's provisions

- A. Consider the path he followed to become second in command.
 1. He was sold to men who were going to Egypt.
 2. He was bought by "Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh" and "captain of the guard." **(Gen 39:1)**
 3. He was put into not just any prison, but "a place where the king's prisoners were confined." **(Gen 39:20)**
 4. He would meet and show God's power to some of Pharaoh's servants.
 5. At the right time he would meet Pharaoh.
- B. Were there any responsibilities on Joseph's part?
 1. He had to be faithful to God. He worked hard at whatever he did. **(Col 3:23-24)**
 2. He had to maintain his spirit.
 3. He had to take advantage of opportunities to serve others.
- C. Consider how Joseph interpreted dreams.
 1. He met the baker and butler because he was willing to serve. **(Gen 40:1-4)**
 2. He learned about their dreams because he cared enough about these men to ask

- why they were sad. (**Gen 40:5-7**)
3. God allowed him to interpret dreams because Joseph recognized Him and His power. He was not doing this for himself. (**Gen 40:8**)
 4. Both men recognized the power of God in Joseph. (**Gen 40:9-23**)
- D. Even with these successes by Joseph he still had to wait.
1. It took two more years. (**Gen 41:1**)
 2. Why does God want us to wait on Him? (**Isa 30:18; 40:31; 49:23**)

Discussion: How does God work?

1. Why is it important that we understand something about how God works?
2. Is timing important to God? Can we see the “why” in delays by God?
3. Did Joseph focus on this one blessing he wanted to the ignoring of other blessings of God?
4. Does God answer every prayer of the righteous? Explain. (**1 Jn 5:14-15**)

III. Joseph was successful in his work because of God

- A. When he stood before Pharaoh he made that point clear. (**Gen 41:14-16**)
 1. This could have offended Pharaoh. Still it was the truth.
 2. This was God’s timing. Pharaoh was ready to listen.
- B. Joseph gave the interpretation without seeking advantages for self. (**Gen 41:17-32**)
 1. There was no flattery for Pharaoh.
 2. The truth about the future would benefit the country.
 3. Joseph recommended a course of action that was wise. He did not recommend himself for the position! (**Gen 41:33-36**)
- C. Pharaoh made a wise decision that greatly blessed his country. (**Gen 41:37-45**)
 1. Joseph gave God the glory for the good he now experiences (**Gen 41:46-52**)
 2. When the famine came then the nation not only was preserved but grew mightily in power and wealth. (**Gen 41:53-57**)
 3. There came a day where Egypt forgot this great man. (**Ex 1:8**)

IV. God’s work prospered though Joseph

- A. What is the plan of God? (**Gen 12:1-3**)
 1. This is the main reason for Joseph’s coming to Egypt. (**Gen 50:20**)
 2. God was to raise up a great nation.
- B. Joseph gave some crucial advice to his father. (**Gen 46:31-34**)
 1. How does this advice work out for good for the future of God’s people?
 2. Did Joseph need to be concerned with anything besides telling the truth?
 3. The greatest purpose for a child of God is to be an instrument in the hands of God!

Discussion: How might God provide for me?

1. Might we face situation where telling the truth might cause others to become angry with us? What should we do?
2. What possible conflicts could we face in a job, in school or on a sports team?
3. How can we best avoid these conflicts?

4. What would a Joseph do?

Conclusion: Will you let God provide for you?