

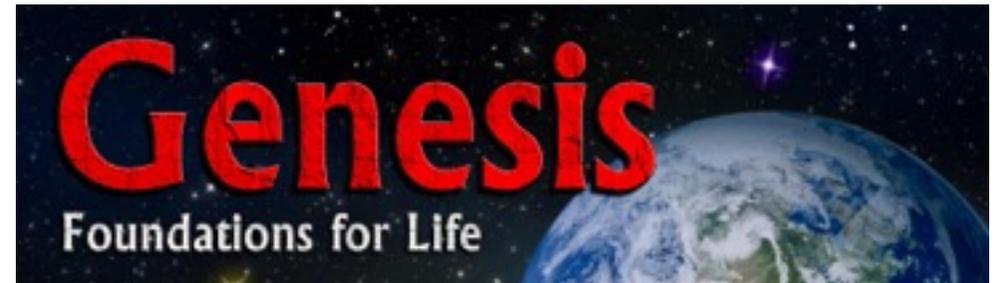
For GC Discussion

- What truths or Scriptures will keep us going even when it seems that God has abandoned us?
- How can we remain faithful to God in both the toughest times in our lives, and also in the normal everyday experiences that we all go through?
- What weapons has God given us in our fight against temptation?

Next Week: we continue our studies in the life of Joseph as we consider his time in prison.

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to *'Still, my soul be still'* by Stuart Townend and Keith & Kristyn Getty. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



Week 19: Joseph Part 2 - Temptation

Chapter 39

This Weeks Summary

This week we saw the beginning of Joseph's life in Egypt as he serves faithfully in the house of Potiphar, only to be thrown in jail for a crime he didn't even commit. Through everything we saw that God was with Joseph.

For Study:

This week we saw Joseph both being faithful with what God had given him despite the circumstances he found himself in, and also fleeing temptation when it came his way - below are verses on both these areas:

Faithfulness

- **Luke 16:1-13**
- **Proverbs 28:18-20**
- **Luke 19:11-27**
- **Matthew 24:36-51**

Resisting Temptation

- **James 1:12-18**
- **Luke 4:1-13**
- **1 Corinthians 10:12-13**
- **1 Timothy 6:1-19**
- **Psalm 119:9-16**

This week we have seen how Joseph responded when placed into a really difficult situation - a stranger in a foreign land, and forced to work as a slave for a foreign master. His example to us of his flight from temptation is an important one - here are another few lessons we can learn from our text this week:

Where is God when bad things happen?

This is a huge question isn't it - so many people will even bring this up as one of the primary reasons for their lack of faith in God, that He just doesn't seem to be there when injustice, suffering and all kinds of evil start to take over. It's one of the striking things about chapter 37 of Genesis that we looked at last week - God's name isn't mentioned even once in all that happens, prompting that exact question - where is He in all the mess of His chosen family?

Maybe that's the exact question that was going through Joseph's mind as he trudged the many miles from Dothan down to Egypt? The Bible too lets us stew on it for a bit as the sordid events of chapter 38 break into the narrative, but thankfully chapter 39 doesn't leave us long before resolving any doubt that might have been in our minds. Has God forgotten, forsaken, and let Joseph down completely? Absolutely not - chapter 39 verse 2 says these simple but powerful words: *'The Lord was with Joseph'*. Despite what it might have seemed to Joseph throughout the events of chapter 37, God hadn't abandoned him, and the words of chapter 39 show us without a shadow of a doubt that even in Joseph's worst suffering, God was right there with him, no doubt strengthening him, comforting him, and working in the depths of his heart to change him more and more into the man He wanted him to be.

So where is God when bad things happen - He's in exactly the same place as He is when good things happen - right there in the heart of the situation. He's never out of control for a moment - quite the opposite - as we'll expand on in a moment, He's always causing whatever is happening to work towards His great plans and purposes for His world

Joseph's Faithfulness

The focal point of this chapter could easily be Joseph's biggest act of faithfulness to God as he resists the temptation to sleep with his master's wife. However, no less remarkable is the faithfulness he showed in the normal everyday affairs of the life that God had given to him. This is a

constant theme in the lives of the patriarchs as the Bible presents them as living normal lives for the most part. Of course God breaks into their everyday in amazing ways every now and then, but you by no means get the impression that this is the norm for them - rather they are called to be faithful to God in the normality of everyday life - and Joseph is no different to anyone else. Before he has to use his supernatural God-given gift to interpret dreams, and before he is elevated to the very top of Egyptian society, he must serve as a slave in the house of a foreign master. Rather than getting fed up, angry at God, and wishing he was somewhere else, Joseph accepts his God-given task with humility. He works faithfully, and the favour of God is with him to such a degree that eventually Potiphar is willing to entrust the whole running of his household into Joseph's hands - and that is no small thing, especially for a foreigner to the land of Egypt. Joseph's story is consistently one of a man who didn't allow the circumstances of life to determine how faithful he was to what God gave him to do, rather he gave all that he had regardless of where he found himself, and we'd do well to emulate that kind of faith.

The Bigger Picture

This whole account of Joseph from start to finish has one mega theme, and that has everything to do with the bigger picture of what is going on. Just as it wouldn't have been evident to Joseph that God was with him as the story begins to unfold, so too it is still not clear at this point what on earth God is doing in everything that is happening. Is there any purpose in what is happening to Joseph, and what do the Scriptures feel the need to focus on it? We probably know the end of the story already, but it's important to recognise that no-one involved had any idea what was going on yet, and it will surely be exactly the same for us when we experience the suffering and trials of life.

What is different for us though is that we have the entire revelation of the Bible, showing us over and over again that those famous words in Romans 8:28 really are true, and God really is working all things 'together for good' for those who love Him, and who He's called to be part of His plans and purposes. The only question we need to ask ourselves is whether we are one of those who have been called by God - if we are then no matter what happens to us we can be certain He hasn't abandoned us, but is working out His glorious purpose for us even in the midst of the worst suffering and pain that could come our way.