

Joseph – The Power To Overcome

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Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, was able to successfully overcome life's problems and difficulties. In his life he faced many challenges (as we all do) and yet he remained faithful to God. His problems did not destroy his faith in Almighty God (which commonly happens), but his faith in the Almighty caused him to be victorious over the many temptations that he encountered. To young and old alike, he is a wonderful example of how to succeed in keeping a pure heart, remain true to the Creator of the universe and ultimately obtain access to heaven's glorious street of gold.

Joseph's Faith Enabled Him to Overcome

1 John 5:4 says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Being a dedicated believer in God is empowering to us as individuals. We see that Joseph not only believed in God, but he also believed that he was responsible for his actions and would give an account to God for them (Genesis 39:9). His faith included the fact that God was always with him in these challenges and was working out an end that would benefit everyone (Genesis 45:4-8). That kind of faith will give a person the fortitude to face his problems with hope and shun temptation that comes his way. Joseph's problems did not disappear just because he believed in God, not at all; some of his problems lasted for years. But Joseph knew what God required of him and he continued to do those things that agreed with Heaven's Will. Romans 10:17 tells us how faith is established in a person's heart: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Not only must we hear what God's will is, but we must also do it: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

Parents, how do you think young Joseph developed his faith so early in life? How did he do such a good job of remembering his Creator in the days of his youth as Ecclesiastes 12:1 teaches us to do? Do you think his father and mother had something to do with that? I certainly do. He was an overcomer because of his faith; but his faith came because his parents taught him what the will of the Lord was. He was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Galatians 6:4). His parents wanted him to live righteously so that he could be pleasing unto God and eventually go to heaven. This is what you will also do if you love your children and want them to go to heaven.

Joseph's Faith Overcame Hate.

"And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him" (Genesis 37:4). Man is tempted to return evil for evil (Romans 12:17,19). Humans reason thusly, "if they are going to hate me, then I will hate them back." It is common to see those who have suffered emotional pain to retaliate against those who have inflicted it. Perhaps nothing hurts worse than being hated by your own family as Joseph was. Hatred will cause a person's words to be ugly and bitter. Instead of being kind Joseph's brothers were unfriendly, even hostile. Joseph's relationship with his brothers could not have been any worse for their hate led them to even contemplate murder (Genesis 37: 18-20). But instead of murder they did something almost as bad, they sold him to a band of travelers, complete strangers, to do with him as they pleased (Genesis 37:23-28). Talk about a cold-hearted act—a dog

would have received better treatment than that. How would Joseph respond? Would he retaliate and give them some of their own medicine? Would he return evil for evil?

Joseph stayed in Egypt for twenty years before he saw his brothers again. He had twenty years in which to brood and to become filled with malice toward his siblings. While serving as a slave and then in prison he could have thought of a thousand ways to get even with his jealous brothers. How sweet his revenge would be when finally he could watch them squirm with pain and bring them to their knees. But that is not what happened at all. Once Joseph realized that his brothers had changed for the better (and that took a few meetings), he was ready to hug and kiss them and forget the past: "Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him" (Genesis 45:15).

Where did Joseph get such a forgiving heart? How was he able to let the past be the past and not hold a grudge? It goes back to his faith in God. During one of their meetings as Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers he said, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life," and "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Genesis 45:5,7). He held no animosity toward them, because he saw God's hand working in these events to bring an end that benefitted all of them. That entire family (Joseph included) had been saved from starvation during a seven year famine. There was nothing to be bitter about, they had food, they were back together again and God's wonderful grace had brought it all to pass.

Has your faith in God kept you from bitterness, hatred, retaliation, ill-will and meanness? Faith should help us to realize that no matter what may befall us in life, God can work those circumstances together for good (Romans 8:28). Joseph overcame the challenge of hate by his strong, enduring belief that God can bring something good my way if I keep following His will and doing what is right. Each Christian must do likewise.

Joseph's Faith Overcame Being a Bond Slave

An Egyptian named Potiphar bought Joseph and took him home and put him to work. Slaves were not owed special treatment and often times never experienced it. Slaves did not get minimum wage--they got no wages at all. They worked and worked and worked and put no money into their pockets. Joseph experienced a drastic change in his life. He went from being his father's favorite son and doing as he pleased, to living in a foreign land, purchased by a stranger who had no special feelings toward him. Do you think that might depress you just a little? I believe it would be very disheartening, but Joseph did not pout, pitch a fit or rebel against his new master. None of those things would have helped his circumstances.

Joseph behaved responsibly and served his master as a trustworthy slave. He did his job and did it right. Notice that as a result God was with Joseph and made him to prosper (Genesis 39:2-6). His service was so respectable that his master gave him charge over his entire house. Still a teenager, Joseph could have despised his position as slave, but instead he became a dependable worker. "Integrity" is an appropriate term to describe Joseph's service to Potiphar and it is a word that should describe any Christian's behavior in the work place. The instructions found in

Ephesians 6:5-8 and Colossians 3:22-25 are required of God's children. Because Joseph behaved himself admirably, God blessed him so absolutely that even others could see it (Genesis 39:3).

Joseph's Faith Overcame the Temptation of a Lustful Woman

None of his temptations were small, but this was one that took no small amount of self-control. Day after day Joseph was tempted to commit fornication with his boss's wife (Genesis 39:10). This worldly woman made numerous verbal advances that would have flattered many men. Whether young or old, a lot of men would have weakened under this temptation and committed the act of adultery--but Joseph wisely refused. We must admire his strong and consistent conviction to remain undefiled in a time of temptation. Joseph is an excellent example for all young people to maintain their virginity and how that doing so will bring heaven's blessings.

Joseph knew that to lie with Potiphar's wife would be an act of sin, for he said: "There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Not only did he see this as a sin, but he also called it a "great wickedness." We need to share his sentiments for they are God's sentiments too. We know that sin is repulsive to God because He calls it an "abomination" and that which should be "abhorred" (Leviticus 18:27; Proverbs 6:16-19; Romans 12:9). Joseph also saw this adulterous act as a violation of the trust Potiphar had placed in him as servant over all his house (Genesis 39:3-6). Joseph is the kind of employee that all employers would love to have working for them. Loving your neighbor means not committing adultery with his wife and therefore, Joseph also demonstrated love for the man that employed him (Romans 13:8-10).

Joseph also saw adultery as a sin against God (Genesis 39:9). Man's sins are acts of disrespect toward God and each sin is offensive to Heaven's holiness. Joseph was not about to rebel against God. He flatly refused even if Potiphar's wife became angry. Joseph would rather have a mere man (or woman) upset with him than the God of heaven. Joseph wanted to walk in a way that pleased God even if it did not please man. Joseph loved God and determined to be loyal to Him; this is the way that you and I need to be.

Where did Joseph get all of these ideas about moral purity, loyalty to God, and doing right to one's neighbor? Did he come up with these ideas all by himself? Or did his righteous father and mother impart these concepts to him? He had learned God's ways of holiness from his parents. But, his parents could not follow him around to police his every step. They could not make him hold to these ideas and live by them. No, all they could do was to teach him the way that was right. It was then up to Joseph to put them into practice and he did. He set his mind to the task of overcoming temptation in whatever form they came to him.

Conclusion

It is a foregone conclusion that Joseph had excellent character and one worthy of imitation. He was tempted again and again, yet he did not yield to temptation. Was Joseph this way accidentally? Do we believe that a person remains pure and successfully pleases God only by

happenstance? No one ever overcomes sin accidentally. He denied sin in his life because he had deliberately made this choice. He had purposed in his heart to do the right thing. Like Joseph we must purpose in our hearts to actively seek to live a life of holiness and one that is in accord with God's will. And like Joseph we will reap the joyful blessings that God has promised to bestow upon His faithful servants (Psalm 23; Galatians 6:7-9; Hebrews 13:5,6). As one said in the long ago, "Be of good courage and let us behave ourselves valiantly" (1 Chronicles 19:13).