

Old Testament Men and Women of Faith

Joseph in Egypt

1. Genesis 39: Joseph is taken to Egypt and purchased by an Egyptian official.
 - Verses 1-6: God blessed Joseph and prospered him. Potiphar entrusted everything he had into the hands of Joseph. He could be trusted! This did not happen immediately. Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery (Genesis 37:2). He was 30 when Pharaoh promoted him (Genesis 41:46), and had been in prison for two years before that (Genesis 41:1). So, he was in Potiphar's house for 11 years. It took 11 years for the full measure of God's blessing to be accomplished in Joseph's life.
 - Luther: "This passage teaches us how God is accustomed to bless even unworthy and ungodly men for the sake of one godly and good man, just as Jacob said above to his father-in-law: 'You had little when I came to you, but the Lord has enriched you wherever I went; meanwhile, while I ran and toiled in your house, your substance has been multiplied.'" Therefore just as Jacob was a blessing in the house of Laban, so Joseph was a blessing in the house of his Egyptian master."
 - Joseph was a good looking man – "Now Joseph was well-built and handsome."
 - Verses 7-20: A failed seduction. Joseph's objection: "My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"
 - While Abraham, Isaac and Jacob often fell short of God's expectation, Joseph did not. Luther: "Accordingly, Joseph was not only good and chaste, and not only diligently poured out prayers to God for his master, for the king, and for the whole land of Egypt, but he was also a most vigilant overseer and manager of the domestic tasks."
 - Potiphar believed the accusation of his wife and had Joseph thrown into prison – but alas, "the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there."

2. Genesis 40: The interpretation of dreams.
 - The cup-bearer and the baker displeased Pharaoh and they each had a dream.
 - "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams." God may certainly speak through dreams and many passages of Scripture show this (Genesis 20:3; 28:12; 31:11; 31:24) However, not every dream is a revelation from God. We must be careful about putting too much weight on dreams. No teaching in the New Testament about interpreting dreams.
 - The fate of the cup-bearer and the baker. Joseph was bold enough to give an interpretation that could be proved right or wrong within three days. In only three days, everyone will know if Joseph was correct or not.
 - Joseph's only complaint: "But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."
 - The three days until Joseph was proved right must have been agonizing for the butler and the baker (though more so for the baker), yet Joseph was found to be a true messenger of God. The cup-bearer was reinstated but did not remember Joseph.

Next time: Pharaoh Has a Dream