

Practical Lessons From the Story of Joseph

by J.R. Miller

The sermon teaches us to live in the present, to care for others, and to follow God's plans and trust in His providence.

Scripture: Genesis 37:19, Genesis 39:6, Genesis 39:9, Genesis 41:14-16, Genesis 41:30-31, Genesis 41:46, Genesis 50:20, Psalm 37:5, Proverbs 24:11-12

Topics: "God's Providence", "Integrity in Trials"

Description

J.R. Miller explores the life of Joseph, emphasizing God's providence in his journey from being a favored son to a slave and then a prisoner, ultimately rising to power in Egypt. He highlights the importance of maintaining integrity and faith in God during trials, as Joseph did when faced with betrayal and false accusations. Miller also discusses the lessons learned from Joseph's experiences, such as the significance of loving goodbyes, the unpredictability of life, and the need for compassion towards others in distress. The sermon encourages believers to trust in God's timing and purpose, even when circumstances seem dire.

Transcript

JOSEPH AND HIS DREAMS

They said one to another, "Behold, here comes that dreamer!" Genesis 37:19

When a story of providence begins--we never know what the end will be. In seven chapters will be retold the story whose beginning we have here a boy coming across the fields carrying a basket. God wanted the family of Israel down in Egypt for a few hundred years. Why? Was not Canaan promised to them as their own land? Why not keep them there? Several reasons may be given.

Canaan was filled with warlike tribes. While there were only a handful of the Israelites, these tribes let them alone. But they were now to grow rapidly, and as soon as they began to be a multitude, war would be waged against them and they would have been exterminated. God's plan, therefore, was to take them away to a place where they could live securely, and grow into a nation--and then to bring them back, able to conquer the hordes of Canaan.

There was another reason for getting them away from Canaan. They must grow up separate from the world. They were to be God's people. They were to receive God's Law and God's Word. From them were

to come teachers, singers, prophets. By and by the Messiah, the world's Redeemer, was to be born of this nation. They must be a holy people, with unmixed blood. If they grew up among the Canaanites, this could not be. These tribes would mingle with them. They must be taken to some place where there would be no temptation to inter-marriages and social commingling. The Egyptians were proud and exclusive. They would have no associations with any foreigners. In Goshen, then, while under the favor and protection of the king--they were effectually shut up by themselves. They were compelled to grow up together, and separate from all other people.

There was yet another reason for their removal from Canaan for a time. Canaan was a country of crude and barbaric peoples, without learning, without culture, without the arts and sciences. Egypt was the seat of the world's highest civilization. It had its great libraries, its colleges, its arts and letters, its culture. By dwelling in Egypt, the Israelites would become educated. They would be trained and would learn the arts necessary to fit them for self-government and for being the conservators of the revealed law of God, and the teachers of the world. We cannot estimate what the Hebrew nation has been to the world, especially through its laws and its religion. Humanly speaking, if the people had grown up in Canaan, they could never have had the influence they attained.

It was God's plan, therefore, that the family of Jacob should be taken away from Canaan to Egypt. This boy coming across the fields with a basket, is to play a most important part in all this great movement.

He did not know it. Likewise, we hardly ever know when we are being used of God in doing important things. Joseph had been sent on an errand. He was seventeen, bright, beautiful, innocent, happy. His mother was dead. He had only one own brother Benjamin, four or five years old. He had ten half-brothers, and with these he was unpopular.

One reason for this unpopularity, was that he was his father's favorite. Doubtless he was better than his brothers. Then he was Rachel's son, and Jacob loved Rachel most tenderly. Jacob loved Joseph best of his sons and did not hide the fact. Indeed he seems to have taken pains to show it. He gave him a coat which advertised to all, that he was his favorite.

Favoritism in a family, is most unwise. It is wrong in itself. The dull child--not the bright one; the weak, faulty child--not the strong, perfect one--really needs the most praise and encouragement, the most help and favor. Also, favoritism usually spoils the child, cultivating pride, self-conceit. Not many of us can stand petting, pampering, and flattery. It is unjust to the others, too--to choose one for special preference and distinction. Once more, favoritism naturally draws upon the favorite, the hatred and envy of the others.

There was a timid knock at a mother's bedroom door early one morning. "Is that you, pet?" asked the mother from within. "No; it isn't pet; it's only me," was the pained answer. But the sorrowful tone cured the mother. There was no more a "pet" in that household. There should not be a "pet" in any home.

"Behold, here comes that dreamer!" Joseph had had some dreams. His brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. The sun, moon, and stars made obeisance to him. With boyish simplicity, he told his dreams--and his brothers never forgave him. The dreams were divine intimations of the boy's future, which came true by and by. All we need to notice at present, however, is that the dreams and the boy's telling of them--made the brothers hate Joseph the more. The merest hints of his present or possible superiority over them--made their envy the more bitter.

Sixty miles away these brothers were pasturing their flocks. The old father wanted to know how they fared. So he sent Joseph to carry messages and a basket of good things to them, and to bring back word again. It was a long, lonely journey for a boy of his years, but at last he was near the end of his journey. Far off the brothers saw him coming. They knew him by his coat of bright colors. "Behold, here comes that dreamer!" they said, one to another. "Come now, and let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'Some evil beast has devoured him.'"

Here we must pause and take a lesson on the fearful danger of allowing envious thoughts to stay even an hour in our heart. Envy grew to murder in these brothers! We see here the wisdom of Paul's counsel, not to let the sun go down upon our anger. We should instantly crush the merest beginnings of envy. The hour of evening prayer, when we bow at God's feet, should always be a time for getting right all that may have gone wrong in us during the day. Then every feeling of bitterness against any person should be cast out of our heart. It should be a time for forgetting all injury, and unkindness, all hurt done us by anyone.

Joseph was not killed. His errand was not yet finished. Instead of a tragedy, came a providence. Reuben, one of the brothers, was not ready for murder. He proposed that they cast the boy into a dry pit. Reuben intended to come and rescue him afterwards. The suggestion was accepted. So they cast Joseph into the pit, and leaving him there, they went to their accustomed meal. "They sat down to eat bread."

But there was an Eye on the weeping, shivering lad--and an Ear that heard his piteous cries in the dark, dank pit. Then there was another providence. The heartless brothers, as they ate and chuckled over their shrewdness in getting the hated dreamer out of their way, looked up and saw a caravan coming. It was going down to Egypt. A bright thought struck one of the brothers. Judah proposed that they sell Joseph to these passing merchants. It would be a good thing for two reasons. They would get rid of the boy's blood--and blood is always a troublesome thing on one's hands. It will not wash off. Besides, there would be a little money in the transaction. So the boy was hurriedly drawn up out of the pit, and after some parleying with the traders, was sold to them for some twelve dollars.

The caravan moved away, carrying the dreamer farther on his errand. The brothers returned to their unfinished meal. Reuben, who had been waiting apart for an opportunity to rescue Joseph, came, and finding the pit empty, supposed the lad had been killed, and tore his clothes in bitter grief. The other brothers, knowing that some news must be sent to the old father, killed a young goat, and dipping the hated coat in the blood, sent it home, innocently explaining: "We found this coat, in this condition, in the field. Does our father think it is his son's coat?" The father recognized it and drew the inference the cruel brothers meant him to draw. "Joseph is without doubt, torn in pieces!" So, for more than twenty years he thought that his dear son Joseph had been torn to pieces--and all the years were filled with sore mourning.

Dropping the thread of the story for the present, let us gather some practical lessons, as we see the boy carried off to a distant land as a slave.

1. When we say our good-byes at our home doors in the morning, though it be but for a few hours separation, as we think--we do not know how long it may be before we shall meet again. Joseph went out from his father's door that morning, on a common errand, for but a few days' absence. We can picture the parting. All the household was much interested in the lad's journey. All sent messages to the absent brothers. The old grandfather Isaac was still living a very aged man, and he would have messages and a blessing to send. Little Benjamin would have a deep interest in his big brother's journey, and would want to go with him. All the family gathered about the door to see Joseph off, and stood there watching him,

calling and waving their good-byes, until he was out of sight. But no one was anxious. In a few days Joseph would be home again--so they thought. No one dreamed that for more than twenty years, that bright happy face would not be seen, that some of them would never see him again.

We must not miss the lesson. Even our most casual partings may be for years, and perhaps forever. When we part at our doors in the morning, one to go to business, one to school, one on a short journey, others to stay in the home--we do not know when we shall all look again in each other's face. We expect to gather at the table at noon, or round the fireside in the evening--but are we sure of it? Many go out in the morning--who never come home at night!

If Jacob and Joseph and the other members of that family had known that morning, that for more than twenty years they would not meet again, would not their parting have been very tender? Yet life is quite as uncertain for us and our households, as it was for that patriarchal family. Any hurried good-bye may be for years, and perhaps final; surely then it should be loving. We should never separate in an angry or impatient mood, with unforgiveness, bitterness, or misunderstanding. We should not say our good-byes coldly, carelessly--but always with thoughtful love and gentle feeling.

Suppose that the one who goes out--should be brought home dead; or should return to find the one dead--whom he left at the door. If the parting were with harsh word or look or thought--how must the surviving one grieve, when sitting by the flower-covered coffin, to remember the last word or look! The flowers then will not atone for the coldness of the parting on the doorstep, nor will they take the pang out of the bereft heart. We should make every parting with home loved ones, every briefest good-bye, sweet enough, kindly enough, for a last farewell, should it prove to be the last, as it may well be.

2. We never know when we set out in the morning, what misfortune or calamity may befall us before the night comes. See that happy lad leaving Hebron, and passing on his way to Shechem. He had no apprehension of danger. With a pure heart and a quiet trust in God, he went along without fear. He was expecting a kindly welcome from his brothers, certainly he never expected for a moment, the cruel reception they gave him. After a short visit away, he hoped to return to the old home, where there was so much love for him. Yet see to what circumstance, he was blindly going!

So we all go on continually, unaware of what lies before us. We spend today in gladness--not knowing that tomorrow will bring us tears. We move on through the flowers, heedless of danger--not suspecting that at our next step we may fall into some hidden pit. We boast of our sturdy health, our rugged strength--not dreaming that tomorrow we may be stricken down by disease. We rejoice in our prosperity, unconscious of the fact that disaster may come any hour and sweep it all away! We set out on the happy journey, without thought of the possible accident on the way--which may leave us crippled or dead.

What is the lesson? Should this uncertainty of all human affairs, sadden our life? Should we tremble at every step we take, lest the next may be into some grief or calamity? No! That is not the lesson. That would take all the joy and all the energy out of life for us. God does not want us to be unhappy while the sun is shining--because by and by it will pass under a cloud. He does not want us to bring in tomorrow's possible shadows--to darken our bright today. He does not want us to dim and spoil youth's gladness--by gloomy forecastings of the trials of old age. He wants us to live in today, to enjoy its blessings, and do its work well--though tomorrow may bring calamity. "Sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof."

How can we do this, you ask, if we know that any bright future has in it, possibilities of sudden darkness? Only by calm, quiet, trustful faith in God, and obedience to him at every step.

We sometimes wish we could see into the future--that we might choose our way, and avoid the rough paths. But suppose that Joseph had been told, on his way to Dothan, how his brothers would treat him, and that he would be sold as a slave; would he have gone forward? Would he not have turned back? Then what a wonderful story of God's providence would have been spoiled! Joseph himself would have missed all that bright future, which lay beyond the period of wrongs and cruelties into which he first plunged. Then think what his people would have missed, what the world would have missed.

It would not be well for us--to know what is before us; we would often meddle with God's plans and spoil them, marring our own future, and harming others. Nor is it well for us to be made afraid and overcautious, by the thought of our day's experiences. Yet this uncertainty ought to hold us near the side of Christ at all times. Nothing can ever go really wrong with us--if he is leading us, and we are quietly following him. Though he takes us through pain, misfortune, suffering--it is because that is the path to true blessing and good.

3. Take a lesson on the heartlessness of some people. When these brothers had cast Joseph into the pit, they sat down to eat bread. Not far from where they were feasting, lay their own brother, suffering untold anguish. They had decided not to kill him--but to leave him in this pit to die. They seem to have forgotten that this was no less cruel, than if they had slain him outright!

We see how envy freezes out of the heart--all warmth of affection, turning it to stone. Unmoved by the thought of their brother's suffering, and indifferent to his cries of anguish which rang in their ears--these men sat down to selfish enjoyment. Let us study the picture closely. A boy who had left his happy home only two or three days since, finds himself in a deep dark pit. He cannot escape out of it. His feet sink in the mire. Slimy creatures creep about him. He can only die.

Does not a like fate befall many a young man in these days? Life all around us, is full of worse pits, deeper because their bottom is hell--into which thousands of young men, and young women, too, are cast.

Brothers cast Joseph into this deep pit. There are brothers who evermore are dragging down their brothers into dark snares. Are we our brothers' keeper? Yes! yet see how many who bear the image of God and who ought to be the loyal guardians of other lives, rest not unless they cause someone to sin. It is a terrible thing to sin, to debauch one's own conscience, to stain one's own soul. But it is a far worse thing to cause others to sin, to put the wine-cup to pure lips, to whisper impure, unholy words into innocent ears. Yet there are brothers who are leading brothers into snares, and causing the young and innocent to fall into evil pits!

Every drinking saloon is a pit, a thousand times darker and more deadly than Joseph's, into which hundreds of the young boys of the country are entrapped, never to come out as they went in. Every gambling den is such a pit, where honor and truth and character are the real ventures, where immortal souls are the fortunes lost. Every house of the immoral woman is such a pit. "Her feet go down to death! Her house is the way to hell."

Men hang red lanterns on the streets where there are pitfalls. Red lights should be hoisted over these pitfalls of death, which are open everywhere. He who loves his own soul, who loves peace, honor, purity, life--should shun them! Those who fall into them--can only be rescued by the strong hand of Almighty God.

But we are not done with this picture. See the brothers feasting while this lad, their own brother, lies yonder in the pit! "How cruel! How heartless!" one says. Yes--but is there no such heartlessness in our

own life? The world is full of sorrow, suffering, need. Go where we may--we find anguish and distress. Here, it is sickness. There, the fluttering crape tells of death within. Inside this door, it is poverty--little children are crying for bread. Next door it is sin, drunkenness, vice, crime--turning God's blessing of life to cursing.

On all hands are our brothers, who have fallen into sin's pits and are perishing there in the darkness! There are homes close to ours, where there is no prayer--and that is worse than no bread. There are little children on our streets, who are being lured into hell's pitfalls--and no one seems to care. This sad, heart-rending picture of the bright, pure, noble boy, in the pit at Dothan, is no strange sight to heaven's angels!

What are we doing? Are we any less heartless than these inhuman brothers were? Do we not sit down to our meals and eat them with relish, unmoved by the cries of need that come in at our windows? "Heartless," does any one say they were? Yes; but is much of our Christian charity any better? In one home, feasting, affluence, luxury--and at the back gate, beggary timidly knocking. Out in the chill darkness the child of poverty crouches, peering into the brilliant parlors. But where are the hearts that have pity?

Souls are perishing. Young men are being snared in pits of hell. Young women are being lured away to wretchedness and degradation. Children are being entrapped and dragged into pits of shame.

And what are we doing? What are the greater number of Christian people doing? Are we trying to rescue these ensnared ones? In our own hearts, we have Christ and the joy of his love and grace. We sit down to our communion tables and feast on heavenly provision. We sing our songs. We clasp our hands in Christian love. But do the cries of the perishing outside, ever break upon our ears as we sit there? Do the visions of our brothers and sisters in their peril and woe, never flit across our eyes, as we look with rapture into the blessed face of Jesus?

There is wonderful response to calls for physical relief when people are in need. Christian people open their hands to the hungry. But there are sorer, bitterer needs. In sin's dark pits where they have fallen, there are dying ones, with none to care. Is there no pity in our heart for these? They are all about us brothers, fallen into pits, brothers, cast into pits by brothers--and with none to heed their cries. If we found a dog, or an ox, or a horse, fallen into a pit--we would hasten to lift it out. Shall we pass by our brothers and not lend a hand to save them?

One tells of a man in a New England town who walks about always with his head bent down as if in sad dejection. Once this man was captain of an ocean vessel. One day, as his ship was speeding through the waters, a signal of distress was observed some distance away. It was seen that there was a man on the piece of wreck. To go to his rescue the ship would have to be stopped and turned back, losing much time. "No," said the captain; "some other vessel will pick him up." He speeded on and was in port in good time, and was commended for his swift passage. But the captain could not get out of his mind the memory of that signal of distress out there on the wild sea, and the sight of that one man on the piece of wreck left there to perish. By day and by night that picture haunted him. He has never gone to sea since; and when he walks on the street, people know him by his downcast face, and remember the pathetic story of his last voyage.

As we are hurrying on these busy days, do we see no signals of distress on life's broad sea? Do we hear no cries no wails of anguish from souls that are out on the angry waves? Do we heed the signals and hearken to the cries? Do we turn away from our business, our pleasure, our ease, our money-getting, our

personal ambitions--to rescue to those who are perishing? Or do we hurry on and say that we have no time for these things--no time to try to save our brothers--no time to lift out of sin's pits, those who have fallen into them--no time to wipe away a tear? If we do not reach out our hand to help--may not our sorrow in eternity be the memory of cries of distress unheeded? May not the visions of perishing ones neglected, haunt us forever?

Listen to the words of Scripture: "Rescue those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter. If you say, 'But we did not know about this;' will not He who weighs hearts consider it? Will not He who protects your life know? Will not He repay a person according to his work?" Proverbs 24:11-12

A modern writer has written an interesting tale entitled "Hands Off" which illustrates God's providence in the life of Joseph. It represents a man in another stage of existence, looking down upon the Hebrew lad in the hands of the Midianites. As the story goes--being an active, ingenious lad, Joseph escaped from the caravan on the first night after his brothers had sold him. He had just reached the outer edge of the camp when a yellow dog began to bark and awakened the men who were in charge of him, and he was returned to captivity.

However the onlooker wanted to kill the dog before he had awakened the camp. Then Joseph would have got away and would have reached home in safety. Great sorrow and suffering would have been avoided. But the onlooker's guardian said, "Hands off." And to let him see the evil of interfering, he took him to a world where he could try the experiment and see its results. There he killed the dog. Joseph reached home in safety, his father rejoiced, his brothers were comforted. It certainly seemed a better way than the other. But when the famine came on, there was no Joseph in Egypt to foretell it and to prepare for it, and there was no food laid up in the storehouses. Palestine and Egypt were devastated by starvation. Great numbers died and the savage Hittites destroyed those whom the famine had spared. Civilization was set back centuries. Egypt was blotted out. Greece and Rome remained in a barbarous state. The history of the whole world was changed, and countless evils came--all because a man in his ignorant wisdom killed a dog, saving a boy from present trouble, to his own and the world's future great loss.

We would better keep our hands off God's providences. Many a beautiful plan of his is spoiled by human meddling. Peter wanted to keep Jesus back from his cross. Suppose he had done so, what would have been the result? No doubt, many a time, love has kept a life back from hardship, sacrifice, and suffering, thereby blighting or marring a destiny, a plan of God. We are likely to pity the boy Joseph, as we see him enter his period of humiliation, and as we read of his being sold as a slave, then cast into fetters. But we well see, that if human pity could have rescued him from this sad part of his life--that the glorious part which followed, with all its blessed service to the world, would have been lost!

Few truths are more sustaining to Christian faith than this--that our times are in God's hands. We forget it too often and sometimes we fret when life brings hard things to endure, when our own plans are broken. But someday we shall see that God knows best.

Joseph was seventeen when the caravan bore him off, as a slave, to Egypt. He was thirty when called from prison to become prime minister of Egypt. The whole period of his humiliation was therefore, thirteen years. The three points on which we are to fix our thoughts are his slave life; his great temptation; his prison life. The special thing to mark is, that Joseph went through all these experiences unhurt. This is a secret worth learning, of how to meet injustice, wrong, cruelty, inhuman treatment, temptation, and misfortune--so as to receive no harm from the experience. Let us look at each of the three phases of

Joseph's humiliation, to see how he bore himself so as to rob them of their bitterness and their power of harming, and to extract from each of them blessing and good.

Joseph's slave life was humiliating. It is always hard to be a slave--not to be one's own, to belong to another, to be driven to grinding toil, to bow beneath heavy burdens bound upon one's shoulders, to feel the lash of the taskmaster, not to be able to claim the fruit of one's own toil, to serve as a mere animal, bought and sold in the market!

Joseph was a slave. His brothers sold him to the traders. In the shambles of Egypt, Potiphar saw him, looked him over as one would a horse, and bought him, paying, no doubt, a handsome profit to the merchants who had brought him down from Canaan. Think how galling was all this, to a boy of Joseph's free spirit! Think, too, of the sense of wrong which filled his heart as he remembered the treatment he had received from his brothers:

They had torn him away from his home.

They had been about to kill him.

They had treated him with heartless cruelty.

They had sold him as a slave.

Surely it was hard to keep one's heart sweet and free from bitterness, with such a sense of injustice in the soul.

But add to this, the hardness of the new condition in which Joseph found himself. He was among strangers. Not a face he had ever seen passed before him. He was utterly alone. He had not a friend in all the land. He was not free to go as he pleased, to do what he liked, to follow his own tastes. Many a young man lands in our free country--poor, friendless, and alone--but with a brave heart filled with noble impulses, free to make what he will of his life, and soon is on the highway to success.

But Joseph was a slave. Potiphar had bought him. He was in fetters. It is hard to conceive of a condition more discouraging. It was a sore test of character, to which Joseph was exposed. The treatment he had received from his brothers tended to make him bitter. His present circumstances seemed enough to crush his spirit. Some men in such experience of injustice, wrong, treachery, and falseness--would have lost all faith in humanity, becoming soured. There are people who have had not the tenth part of Joseph's trouble, but who are embittered against the world and denounce it as cold and heartless and ungrateful. Other men there are who, having been wronged, grow hard and vindictive, and live only to repay the injustice they have received--with like injustice blow for blow. Still others sullenly surrender to the injuries they have received--and with broken spirit creep through life, like wrecks drifting on the sea, pitiable spectacles to men and angels.

Few men there are, who pass through such experiences of injustice and cruelty as those which Joseph met with--and keep their heart sweet and gentle, their faith in God bright and clear, and their spirit brave and strong. It showed the healthiness and wholesomeness of Joseph's nature, that he passed through the galling and trying experiences of his humiliation unhurt. He was not soured toward men. He did not grow morbid, sullen, or disheartened. Though a slave, he accepted his position with cheerfulness, and entered heartily into his new life--doing his duties so well that he soon became overseer in his master's house. He wasted no time or strength, in weeping over his misfortunes. He did not grieve over his wrongs, nor

exhaust himself in self-pity, which is one of the most miserable and unmanly of emotions. He did not burn out the love of his heart, in vindictive and resentful feelings. He did not brood over his wrongs. He looked forward and not back; out and not in.

A poet writes of one who had had bitter experiences, that the darkness crept into her heart and darkened her eyes. But the darkness about Joseph's life, was not allowed to enter his heart. This was one of the great secrets of his victorious living. The light within him continued to burn pure and clear. With hatred all about him--he kept love in his heart. Enduring injuries, wrongs, and injustices--his spirit was forgiving. With a thousand things that tended to discourage and dishearten him, to break his spirit--he refused to be discouraged. Because other men lived unworthily, was but a stronger reason why he should live worthily. Because he was treated cruelly and wickedly, was fresh reason why he should give to others about him the best service of love and unselfishness. That his condition was hard--was to him a new motive for living heroically and nobly.

So we find the spirit of Joseph unbroken, under all that was galling and crushing in his circumstances. The lesson cannot be too urgently pressed. Many people find life hard. Sometimes wrong and injustice make the days bitter. Sometimes the atmosphere of daily life is one of strife, petty persecution, miserable fault-finding, incessant opposition, nagging, criticism. Home life ideally ought to be loving, inspiring, encouraging, helpful, full of all kindness and grace. Yet there are homes little better than Joseph's, where instead of love--are envy, selfishness, bitterness. There are those, too, who must live continually amid unjust opposition and antagonism. There are those whose life is little better than that of a slave, with grinding toil half-requited, driven as by cruel taskmasters to severe and rigorous service. There are those who are pressed on all sides by human selfishness, who suffer from the dishonesty, the baseness, the avarice, the selfishness of others.

Let us not fail to get the lesson. The problem of life--is to keep the heart warm and kindly--amid all injustice and wrong; to keep the spirit brave and cheerful--in the midst of all that is hard in life's circumstances and conditions; to be true and right and strong--in all moral purpose and deed, however others may act toward us. Our inner life should not be affected by our external experiences. Right is right, no matter what others about us may do. We must be true--no matter if all the world is false--even false to us. We must be unselfish and loving--though even our nearest friends prove selfish and cruel to us. We must keep our spirit strong, cheerful and hopeful--though adversities and misfortunes seem to leave us nothing of the fruit of all our labors.

A young man must do his work well, making the most and best of his life, though compelled to serve for most inadequate wages. In a word we are to live victoriously, truly, nobly, sweetly, cheerfully, songfully--in spite of whatever may be uncongenial in our condition!

This is the lesson from the first period of Joseph's humiliation. This is the lesson of all Christian life. We should not let the outside darkness into our soul. We should seek to be delivered from all morbidness and all unwholesomeness. We should not allow anything to crush us. Though a slave as to our condition, our spirit should be free.

We read that Joseph bore himself so congenially, and did his work so well, and was so capable, so true, so trustworthy, that Potiphar "left all that he owned under Joseph's care; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate." Genesis 39:6. Joseph would never have won such a success--if he had given up to discouragement, if he had brooded over his wrongs, if he had sulked and complained, if he

had spent his time in vain regrets or in vindictive feelings. We should learn the lesson, and it is worth learning--it is life's highest and best lesson. It is the victory of the faith in Christ which overcomes the world.

Another part of Joseph's humiliation was his temptation. He had been in Potiphar's house for several years. He had lived so worthily and worked so faithfully, that he had his master's fullest confidence and had risen to the first place in the household. We can think of the boy's dreams of greatness as again coming into the young man's heart, as he found himself so honored. His temptation was, by an intrigue with Potiphar's wife--to rise to yet higher prominence. He would throw off his slave's chains and become a man of rank in the great nation of Egypt. This, and not the appeal to base immoral passion, was the chief element in the temptation to Joseph.

We may think, too, of the circumstances which made the trial the harder. Joseph was away from home and friends. No eye of mother, father or sister was upon him, inspiring him to all that was pure, true, and noble. We do not realize what a restraint against wrong-doing and all that is vile and ignoble--we have in the expectations of our friends for us, their belief in us. Joseph was in a heathen land, too, where the standard of morals was low and where such intrigues were common. We do not realize how much we are helped in our virtue--by the high ideals we find around us, and by the knowledge that certain lapses and sins would expose us to disgrace, and to the condemnation of society. Joseph had none of these social restraints to help him to be strong and pure.

But he met the temptation on far higher grounds, on grounds of pure principle. Note his answer to the solicitation of his temptress: "No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Two motives appear in these words of Joseph's. One is loyalty to his master. Potiphar had trusted him, trusted him implicitly with all that he had. Could he now be guilty of such a base wrong--to the man who had placed such confidence in him? To Joseph's mind, such an act would be treachery to his friend. In the face of the flattering solicitation of this woman high in rank, unmoved by her passionate temptation, regardless of the consequences which offending her might bring upon him--he kept his eye fixed on his duty and wavered not--but flung the temptress from him and tore himself away his soul unstained.

The other motive which saved him was his loyalty to God. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" All sin is sin against God. "Against you, you only, have I sinned," said David in his penitence. Cruelty to an animal--is sin against God. Treachery to Potiphar--was sin against God. All our acts have reference to God. Sins against innocence and purity--are sins against God. We can never get away from our relation to God, in any act of our life. In all such temptations as this of Joseph's, men should remember that while to yield would be treason to another--it would also be sin against God.

Another element of Joseph's nobleness of character in this case, appears in his silence under false accusation. His temptress, in her disappointment and anger, charged him to her husband with the most reprehensible behavior. Under this accusation, Joseph was seized and cast into fetters. But he said not a word to Potiphar, to turn suspicion upon the accusing wife. He seems to have thought still of Potiphar's honor, and rather than lay a stain upon it--he would go to the dungeon under the false charge, leaving to God the vindication of his own honor and the proving of his own innocence. It has been said, "For his purity you will find his equal--one among a thousand; for his mercy--scarcely one." By a word he could have told Potiphar the whole story--but rather than speak that word--he suffered the dishonoring

accusation to rest undenied.

Nothing is harder than to live under false charges which bring upon one suspicion and condemnation, which hinder one's advancement, and which by breaking silence--one could cast off. There are people who do live, thus bearing reproach and odium to shield others. Sometimes it seems to be a duty--but it is very hard. Joseph had resisted temptation in order to be loyal to Potiphar; now Potiphar thinks him guilty of the very baseness, which for love of him--he had scorned to commit. But in all this, Joseph kept his heart sweet and loving.

Sometimes it costs very dearly--to be true to God. Joseph lay now in a dungeon. But his loss through doing right, was nothing in comparison with what he would have lost--had he done the wickedness to which he was tempted. His prison gloom, deep as it was, was as noonday, compared with what would have been the darkness of his soul under the blight of evil, and the bitterness of remorse. The chains that hung upon him in his dungeon, were but like feathers in comparison with the heavy chains which would have bound his soul, had he yielded to the temptation. Though in a prison, his feet hurt by fetters--he was a free man because his conscience was free, and his heart was pure! No fear of consequences should ever drive us to do a wrong thing.

It is better to suffer any loss, any cost, any sacrifice--than be eaten up by remorse! Better be hurled down from a high place for doing right--than win worldly honor by doing wrong! Better lose our right hand--than lose our purity of soul! Better rot in prison--than to sin against God!

It was the prayer of a girl queen, which she wrote with a diamond point on her castle window, "Keep me pure; make others great." That is the lesson of Joseph's victory over temptation; dishonor, loss, dungeon, death--anything before sin!

Another phase of Joseph's humiliation was, his prison life. It was a terrible blight upon his young life--to be thus hurled into a dungeon. We can imagine his thoughts when he found himself shut away in the darkness, and bound with chains. This, then, was the reward of being true to God and to duty! He had resisted sin--and here he was in irons, while his guilty temptress was posing as an injured woman, receiving compassion and enjoying luxury!

However bitter the prison may have been at first to Joseph, we know that here as before--he soon rose to honor. He was not yet crushed. The noble soul within him, rose superior to all the effects of the misfortunes and the wrongs under which he was suffering. He did not lie down and despair. Soon his old aptitude for meeting life with courage and hope, showed itself. "The jailer put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. The chief jailer had no more worries after that, because Joseph took care of everything." So we find Joseph always superior to his condition and circumstances.

There is a story of one who during a time of persecution, was cast into a deep dungeon, far underground. Once only each day, and for but half an hour, did the outer light stream down into the darkness of the prison. But this good man found an old iron nail and a piece of stone among the rubbish on his cell floor. Using the nail for a chisel, and the piece of stone for a mallet, he carved on his prison wall, during the few moments when the light streamed in, a crude figure of the Savior on his cross.

So should we do in our life prisons. Thus did Joseph. He did not hew any figures on the stone walls which shut him in; but on the walls of his own heart he cut the figures of hope, joy and love. His heart was not in

chains. The fetters did not hurt his soul. He was victorious over all the wrong, the injustice, the false accusation, the suffering. Indeed he found his period of humiliation a great time of growth, of discipline, of training.

At length he was summoned from the prison to sit beside the king; and so well was he fitted for greatness and for wise ruling, that his head did not grow dizzy--when he stood on this pinnacle of honor and fame.

So we get from this part of our story--the duty of victoriousness in all life's conditions. What is the secret? Be true to God. Be true to yourself. Be true to your fellow men. The record tells us: "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." This was when he was a slave. Then of the time of his prison life we read: "The Lord was with Joseph, and showed kindness unto him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper." Truly, if we are true to God--God will bless us, and even our misfortunes, he will use to train us for larger, better, nobler, more useful life!

A writer tells the story of the rose of Jericho--how it flourishes in lack of all things plants need in the hot desert--in the rocky crevices, by the dusty wayside, in the rubbish heap. Even more, the fierce sirocco tears it from its place and flings it far out upon the ocean, and there, driven by the storms and tossed by the salt waves--it still lives and grows. So should we grow in any and all circumstances, wherever we may be cast in sorrow, in hardship, in misfortune, in suffering. A deathless life is in us, and we should be unconquerable. Christ is with us; Christ's life is in us; nothing should be allowed to crush us. Live near the heart of Christ--and the world's power will not hurt you, nor the world's darkness dim your soul's light.

FROM PRISON TO PALACE

"Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon." Genesis 41:14

The story reads like a romance novel! In the morning, Joseph lay in prison. He had been there probably three years. He knew of nothing that gave any hope of release. In the evening he was wearing the king's ring, was arrayed in vestures of fine linen, had a gold chain around his neck, and was honored as next to the king. It seems too strange to be true--yet it was true.

We may think a moment of the man in the prison.

He was not a criminal. He was in prison on false charges. Let us beware lest we do injustice to others--by believing false things about them. What is it in human nature, that inclines people to believe evil of others? Shall we not strive to have the love which thinks no evil? In the story of Joseph, we know the other side, and we see a man with a white soul, though under the shadow of a black charge. May it not be so, with some other person we know of, whom people allege dishonorable things--but who in God's sight is innocent, with clean soul? We should plead for justice, for charity, toward all. We should shut our ears to the insinuations and whisperings of the slanderer's tongue! It was a lie that put the felon's garb and chain upon Joseph, robbed him of his good name, and turned the dungeon key upon him! Be slow to believe an accusation against another! One false mouth can destroy the reputation won by a lifetime of worthy deeds!

Joseph was in prison under a false charge. The very treachery against his master which his noble nature scorned to commit--his master was made to believe he had committed. Yet he sealed his lips and went to the dungeon without one word of self-exculpation. He could not exculpate himself without bringing scandal and ruin upon his master's home--and he was silent. This was a case when silence was hard--but when silence was noble.

Any one of us may become the innocent victim of calumny. Blameless, we may have to endure false accusations. As Christians, what should we do in such a case? Of course, not all cases are alike. In some instances vindication may be possible, and it may be our duty to seek it. But there may be cases, like Joseph's, when we cannot free ourselves from false accusation, without bringing dishonor and suffering upon others. Then it may be our duty, like Joseph, too--to suffer in silence and in patience. He left all in God's hands, doing nothing himself to right the wrong. There is a verse in the thirty-seventh Psalm, which gives a lesson and a promise: "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun."

Joseph committed his way into the Lord's hands that terrible day. He kept his own hands off. He was three years under the black cloud--but then he came forth into the light, and there was not a stain on his soul. We may safely leave our vindication to God!

Those were hard years for Joseph indeed, all those thirteen years were--from the day the boy was sold to the passing caravan--until he was sent for by Pharaoh, and lifted to honor. But as hard as they were--they did not hurt him. There are little flowers that grow through all the coldest winter, under the snows, keeping sweet and beautiful beneath the deepest drifts, coming out in the spring days, when the snow melts away--unhurt, as lovely and fragrant as if they had been sheltered in a conservatory! So it was that the life of Joseph remained gentle, beautiful and sweet--under all the terrible trials of those years: wrong, cruelty, heartlessness, injustice, inhumanity from brothers, too; then slavery, degradation; then false accusation, fetters.

Some of us can hardly keep sweet under little imaginary slights, and the common frictions and microscopical hurts and injustices of fairly easy conditions. Some of us grow morbid and cynical, if a friend omits some simple amenity!

The noble bearing of Joseph, teaches us to be superior to all circumstances and conditions, to all unkind or unjust treatment. That is the great lesson of life. If you are going to be affected by every change of social temperature, by every variation of experience your spirits running up and down like the mercury in the thermometer with the fluctuations of the atmosphere, you will have a sorry life! That is not living. But as Christians, we have the secret of a divine life within us. We must live unaffected by circumstances. Morbidness is sickly living. Cynicism is unworthy of a being in whose heart human blood pulses, especially in a heart in which Christ's life throbs. Discouragement is undivine.

We must be strong in the grace of God. We must be unconquerable through him who loved us. We must put misfortunes, adversities, personal injuries, sufferings, trials--under our feet, and tread ever upward over them. We must conquer ourselves also--the evil that is in us, we must subjugate. That is the way to grow.

Remember, your task in living--is to keep sweet, to keep your heart gentle, brave, strong, loving, full of hope--under the worst that the years can bring you of injustice, hardship, suffering, and trial. That is what Joseph did. Then when he was suddenly needed for a great duty, he did not fail.

Something went wrong one day, in the big world above Joseph's dungeon. There was trouble in Pharaoh's palace. Two high officials were careless and they were hurried off to prison. Why is this related in the Bible? Because it was one of the links in the wonderful chain of providence, by which Joseph was at last brought to his place of power.

We do not know what circumstances or events of that vast complex network of things about us, will help change our destiny. "God is always coming down to us through unlikely paths, meeting us unexpectedly." We see how important to Joseph was the coming of Pharaoh's two officers to the prison. Let us walk reverently along all life's paths. We know not what trivial occurrence, any day--may affect all our after course unto the end. Who knows but the casual meeting with someone today--may have great good for us long years hence? The touching of Joseph's life by these prisoners from the palace, was a link in the chain by which Joseph was lifted out! Just so, the person you meet casually tomorrow, may have in his hand the key which some day will open a prison for you and lead you to liberty.

Yet it seemed for a long time, as if nothing would come of the touching of Joseph's destiny by this hand from the outside. Joseph told the meaning of the men's dreams, and in three days what he had said came true. As the chief butler went out happy from the prison, to resume his old duties--he parted very affectionately from his friend. Joseph had said to him: "But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison." No doubt the butler promised to do so. Oh yes, certainly he would remember his prison friend! But here are the pathetic words with which the record closes: "The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him."

He was restored to his place in the palace. He again wore the insignia of office. He was again in the blaze and brilliance of the royal presence. Waiting in his prison, Joseph hoped each day to be released, through the strong influence of his friend at court. He waited and hoped--and yet the days went on without bringing any token that he was remembered. Two years passed, and still Joseph languished in the darkness, wearing his chains. The chief butler, who had been so profuse in his promises to remember him, forgot him!

This "chief butler" has many successors in all ages. We are all quite ready to condemn his ingratitude; but do we never repeat his sin? In the time when help comes to us, or deliverance, or favor--our hearts are warm with grateful feeling. We will never forget this kindness, we say with sincere intention. But do we never forget it? We probably remember injuries done to us. It is hard for many people to forget a wrong. "I forgive him--but I can never forget his treatment," we hear people say. Sights, and cutting words, and unkindnesses, and neglects--how well we remember these! Some of us nurse them and cherish their memory. But have we as faithful recollection of favors, kind words, comforts given in trouble, help in need? "Men too often write the record of grudges in marble--and of favors in sand." Let us not fail to get the lesson. Let us write the record of hurts and wrongs done to us in sand--and of kindnesses shown to us in stone.

Stop a moment right now, and think. Is there someone somewhere, suffering, shut in, perhaps enduring wrong, bearing a heavy load--to whom once you gave a promise of sympathy, of a visit, of an effort to help or relieve--a promise you have now forgotten? When we find people in distress or sorrow or adversity or crushed by some heavy blow--we are quite apt to promise them love and thought and friendly help. But do we always keep our promises? Our words cheer them, and they look for our coming again, and watch and hope for the help we so eagerly said we would give; but how often do we forget, just as the butler forgot Joseph? Is there not someone to whom you spoke in strong words of sympathy, in a time when your heart was warm? You meant to call again very soon. You meant to lend a hand to help the weary struggler. You meant to try to give or secure the relief the person needed. But out in the busy world, you forgot it. "The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him." For two years he forgot him!

There are forgotten Josephs everywhere, to whom promises have been made--but not kept. We should recall those to whom we once spoke so freely, so earnestly. Have we ever called since? Have we ever done anything to give the comfort we promised to give? Think of the disappointment we have caused, the long weary waiting, for kindness expected--but which we have forgotten to render.

We do not know what power there is in our heart to bless others, to make the world a little brighter for them, the burden a little lighter, the path a little easier. All about us in life, are dungeons in which suffering Josephs lie in chains! It is dark about them. The air is not sweet. Bird songs do not break in upon the heavy silence. They are lonely. You and I, out in the free air, hear the bird songs, and quaff the nectar of human happiness, and have joy and love for our portion. Let us not forget the Josephs in their prisons. They look for tokens from us, to assure them that they are not forgotten. They expect our visits, some proofs at least of kindly thought, some effort to give relief or comfort. You have in your heart's full cup, that which will give strength and cheer. Do not think it a small thing--to put a little new hope or courage or gladness into a fainting human heart. It is helping God warm this world. It is helping Christ save a soul.

But now a strange thing happened. As it so happened, it was better for Joseph, in the end, that the butler did not speak for him to the king for so long a time. Had he made intercession for him at once, and had Pharaoh listened to the plea and set Joseph free, what would have been the result? Joseph could not have gone back to Potiphar's house, and would probably have been sold away from the city, for he was still Potiphar's slave. Or possibly he might have been set free to return to Hebron. In any case, he would not likely have been within reach when he was sought for to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

Consider the consequences. His career would have been toward obscurity. Perhaps he would never have been heard of again, and then this charming story would never have been written. Then Pharaoh's dreams would have had no interpreter. The years of plenty would have come and passed, leaving no storehouses filled for the famine years which followed. In the terrible distress of those years--the family of Jacob, with its holy seed, might have perished from the earth.

But the ingratitude of the butler, inexcusable as it was, left Joseph in the prison, suffering unjustly--but waiting close at hand, until the moment came when he would be needed for a work of stupendous importance. While God's purposes were slowly ripening in the world outside, Joseph's character also was ripening, into strength and self-discipline within the dungeon walls!

So we see again the wonderful providence of God, how every link of the chain fits into its own place with most delicate precision. Nothing comes a moment too soon, nothing lags, coming a minute too late. God's providence is like God's nature. Among the stars there are no haphazard movements. The sun never rises late. No star sets too early. So in providence, everything comes in its set time. God's clock is never a second slow. Can this be mere chance? Can nature's perfect adjustments, be chance? Can the wonderful beauty and beneficence of providence, be chance, a mere endless succession of happy, blessed coincidences? Oh no, there is a God whose hand moves the machinery of the universe--and that God is our Father! There is a heart beating at the center of all things. He who has ears to hear, cannot but hear it.

Thus in Joseph's life every smallest event, was wrought into the final result with perfect adaptation. The inhuman wickedness of his brothers in selling him, the foul lie of Potiphar's wife which sent him to a dungeon, the ingratitude of the butler which left him friendless and forgotten for two years in prison--all these wrongs from others, were by the divine touch, transmuted into blessings!

As we read this story, we see all this in the life of Joseph. Shall we suppose that Joseph's life was in God's hand, in any exceptional sense? Is there any less of God's providence in our life--than there was in the life of that Hebrew lad? He did not see the providence at the time--not until afterwards did the dark clouds disclose their silver lining, or the rough iron fetters reveal themselves as gold. Not until afterwards, shall we see that our disappointments, hardships, trials, misfortunes, and the wrongs done to us by others--are all made parts of God's providence toward us! Not until afterwards--but the "afterwards" is sure if only we firmly and faithfully follow Christ and keep our own hands off. God works slowly--and is never in a hurry.

The light which shines from this story of Joseph, ought to shine into a great many lives today with its beam of cheer and hope--for those who are waiting amid discouraging circumstances. The heart of God is beating in each life's experiences, and the hand of God is working; only the hour for full revealing has not yet come on the dial of the clock of God.

At last came the time for Joseph's deliverance and exaltation. Pharaoh had a double dream. It was not an ordinary dream; it was God's way of revealing the future to the king, that he might be a true father to his people. Seven fat cows feeding in a meadow; and seven lean cows standing by the Nile. The seven fat cattle eaten up by the seven lean--which are lean as ever, afterwards. Seven fat, good ears of corn; and seven thin, blasted ears. The thin ears devour the fat ears--and are thin as ever.

The dream troubled the king. He sent for Egypt's famed wise men, dream-interpreters; but they gave him no light. Now, at last, after two years of ungrateful forgetting, the butler remembered his fault and told Pharaoh the story of the Hebrew slave in the prison, who had interpreted his own dream. Swiftly runs the messenger to the prison, and Joseph is called into the presence of the king. He is thirty years old. He has been thirteen years in Egypt, as slave and prisoner. Now his time for honor and for service has come. This is the hour, and here is the duty for which all his former life has been a preparation.

Pharaoh tells his dreams. Listen to Joseph's answer. A vain man would have had his head turned by such a sudden blaze of royal splendor about him, and would have spoken boastfully. But Joseph speaks with the humility of an unspoiled child. "It is beyond my power to do this--ut God will tell you what it means." We should not miss the lesson--we who teach others, we to whom perplexed ones come with their questions. We should not seek to show our own wisdom--but should hide ourselves away, and point to God as the One who is the source of whatever wisdom our lips may speak. "It is beyond my power to do this--but God will tell you what it means."

Then Joseph told the king what the dream meant. It was God's message to Pharaoh--a glimpse into the future. There would be seven years of great plenty in Egypt, and after these, seven years of sore famine. And the famine would be so grievous, that it would eat up all the food of the abundant years. Joseph went on to advise the king what to do to find a wise man and let him gather the extra food of the seven years of plenty, and lay it up in great storehouses to meet the needs of the coming years of famine.

At once the king appointed Joseph himself to this place of honor and trust. He took off his signet ring and put it on Joseph's hand, thus giving him almost royal authority. He arrayed him in vestures of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck--insignia of princely rank. He caused him to ride in a chariot next to the king's own, in a royal procession along the streets. He gave him a new name Zaphenath-paneah, which meant "bread of life" in allusion to Joseph's great service in saving the land from famine. He gave to him also in marriage a daughter of one of Egypt's priests, thus elevating him into the priestly caste.

All this honor came suddenly to Joseph. Was it not worth waiting for? The way seemed long from the pit at Dothan to the steps of Egypt's throne. The dreams of the Hebrew boy were long in coming true. The experiences were hard and tended to crush and destroy the young life. Those thirteen years out of the golden prime of life seemed wasted. Yet, we should notice that all this time, and in all these experiences, God was training the man for his work. The butler's dream came true in three days--but there was not much of it when it was fulfilled. It took thirteen years for Joseph's dreams to be realized, because the dreams meant so much. If a man's work is of small importance, he can be prepared for it in a little while. But when he has a great mission to fulfill, it requires a long time to fit him for it. Let no one grow impatient in God's school, however slow the advancement may be. The longer time God takes with your training, and the harder the discipline is--the richer will be your life when the work is finished.

No doubt Joseph recognized the providence of God in all those slow years of his life. He believed that he was being prepared for his life's mission. This was the secret of his unconquerable hope and courage and of all his sweet life--in the trying experiences of those years. He knew he was in God's school. Providence was a Bible to him. The same may become just as true in our life--as it was in his. We may accept our condition as God's appointment for us. Then we may read God's will for us as clearly in each day's unfoldings--as if the divine finger wrote it out for us on a sheet of paper under our eye! We shall cease then our restless struggling. We shall no longer fight so for our own way--but will take God's way.

Thus and thus only, can anyone be what God made him to be, and do what God made him to do in this world. God has a plan for every life--but we can fulfill that plan only by daily reading the little page of God's Bible which he writes for us on the tablet of the day's providences. To be able to say always in disappointment, in sorrow, in loss, in the suffering of injuries at the hands of others, in the midst of pain and trial, "God is teaching me some new lesson, training me for some new duty, bringing out in me some new beauty of character," is to live as we should live. One incident left out in Joseph's strange career, would have broken the chain and spoiled all. So it is in every life; all the events are necessary to fit us for the place for which God is preparing us.

We may learn a lesson from the system which Joseph adopted of providing in the years of plenty, for the years of famine. In everyone's life there are seasons of abundance, of rare plenty--and then there will come also, surely, seasons that are empty and full of need. It is wisdom's part to gather the bounties of the full years--and lay them up in store for the empty years.

Youth is a time of plenty. It brings opportunities for education, for study, for reading, for self-discipline, for the formation of habits, for the culture of character, for the establishment of good principles and for careful training and preparation for life's work or business. If youth's plenty is allowed to run to waste--if the season of youth is not improved, after life can bring only misfortune and failure.

In the years of health and prosperity, we should lay up a little of our plenty for the "rainy day" that will certainly come the day of sickness, when the hands cannot work and the doctor's bill must be paid. Through the years of joy, we should lay up in our heart the divine comfort for the years of sorrow which will come. Through youth and manhood or womanhood, we should be ever filling storehouses to draw from in old age. In the present life, we must lay up treasures in heaven for the life to come. In the days when the gospel's grace is falling like sunshine about us, we must receive it into our heart, or we shall perish in the eternal years of darkness.

AN INTERPRETER FOR GOD

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." Genesis 41:15-16

Joseph was an interpreter for God. There are two instances recorded in which he made known the meaning of dreams. The first was in the prison in Egypt. Two officials from the king's palace were among his fellow prisoners. Joseph had risen to influence in the prison. "The Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison," is the way the Bible puts it. "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison." So when these distinguished prisoners from the palace came into the dungeon, they fell under Joseph's care.

One morning when Joseph was going his rounds he found these men sad. H

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