

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 31:2:2010

Reading: Genesis 39:1-12

GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD (JOSEPH)

3. YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION

A little boy stood admiring a big stack of apples outside a shop. The owner came out and said to the little boy, “ *are you trying to steal one of those apples ?*” The boy answered, “ *No, I am trying not to steal one.*” Little Johnny’s mother had baked a fresh batch of cookies, and placed them in the cookie jar, giving instructions that no one was to touch them until after dinner. But it was not long before she heard the lid of the jar move and she called out, “ *Johnny, what are you doing ?*” To which a meek voice replied, “ *My hand is in the cookie jar resisting temptation.*” Temptation is the oldest of all the inner conflicts in the heart of man. There is not one person, including Christ, who has not struggled with it. And except for Christ, there is not one person who has not suffered the consequences of yielding to it. The British writer Oscar Wilde said, “ *I can resist anything but temptation.*” He also said, “ *the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it.*” Yet as believers we must learn how to overcome temptation. Josh Billing was right when he said, “ *One half the trouble of this life can be traced to saying yes to quickly, and not saying no soon enough.*” Temptation is an inevitable part of our fallen world. Charles Swindoll reminds us that temptation wears

many faces.

1. There is Material Temptation:

This is a lust for things. It can be something as large as a house or it can be something as small as a ring.

2. There is Personal Temptation:

This is a lust for status. Some folks spend all their energies trying to gain special recognition, fame, or power. They sacrifice friends, family, indeed whatever gets in their way to possess a title or position.

3. There is Sensual Temptation:

This is the lust for another person. It’s the desire to enjoy the body of another individual when such pleasure is not legally or morally permissible. Now regardless of the kind of temptation all of us know the frustration of trying to stop a strong lust with a weak will. You see, these three things bring down a lot of us. *Greed*, material temptation, *glory*, personal temptation, *girls*, sensual temptation, but none of them destroyed the godly son of Jacob. By the grace of God Joseph overcame by refusing sin point blank. Now don’t forget when we left Joseph at the end of (Ch 37) he was on his way to Egypt, the property of Ishmaelite traders, but when we meet Joseph in Egypt in (Ch 39) he is in a country and culture he didn’t know surrounded by a language he didn’t understand. This once longed for child of Rachel and openly favoured son of Joseph has been sold as a common slave and forced into a

situation that seemed even worse than the pit into which his brothers had thrown him. He was purchased by a man named Potiphar, who was Captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard, we could say that he was the chief of Pharaoh's secret police. My the circumstances into which Joseph was thrust were less ideal yet,

(1) GOD WAS FOR HIM

He wasn't protected *from* the circumstances but *in* the circumstances. Sometimes we ask God to remove the problem from us or remove us from the problem. But most of the time what the Lord does is change our attitude toward the circumstances in which we find ourselves. God could have done things differently in Joseph's life. But God purposed that "*through many dangers, toils, and snares,*" He would fashion His servant for noble service and erase the blemishes in his character, even as He is doing with us. A. W. Tozer once said, "***It is doubtful that God ever used anybody greatly without first hurting him deeply.***" Joseph's circumstances were harsh but God was for Him. Indeed if you look at the context, you'll notice,

(a) *The Lord was PRESENT with Him:*

Here was a young man who enjoyed the presence of God in his life. We read "*And the Lord was with Joseph.*" (39:2) From early in his teenage years his life was marked by separation, consecration, and dedication. Joseph loved the Lord and lived for the Lord. He had been the victim of both jealousy and cruelty from the hands of his brothers, also the pains inflicted by slavery as he

arrives in Egypt without money, friends, language or hope. Yet just like Christ on the Cross, the victim was in fact the victor because "*the Lord was with him.*" Even though his earthly father stayed behind in Canaan, His heavenly Father came with him into Egypt. Joseph would have agreed with the psalmist when he wrote, "*The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee, for thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee.*" (Ps 9:9-10) I wonder this are you disappointed, broken, unable to alter your circumstances ? Do you recall the experience that Moses had leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. Like you he was anxious and he said to the Lord, "*Thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me.*" (Ex 33:12) Do you what the Lord said, "*My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.*" (Ex 33:14) Was this not the very confidence undergirding Joseph's life ? Oh, that we present day believers with all our greater grounds for certainty would live in the awareness of God's presence and rest in his sovereignty. (a)

(b) *The Lord was PERCEIVED in Him:*

Look if you will at (39:3) if you will. Now Joseph didn't tell Potiphar that the Lord was with him, no, "*his master saw that the Lord was with him.*" Joseph was not going about with a sullen look, a long face, and a resentful spirit. He was not spending hours plotting revenge or cursing the Lord. No, he decided that the Lord had some purpose in allowing himself to be sold as a slave and he said to himself, "*everybody thinks I am Potiphars' slave. But I*

am actually God's slave. And since I am God's slave serving Potiphar I'm going to be best slave Potiphar ever had.” Is it not that so often in adverse circumstances we Christians moan our fate, instead of looking for ways to glorify the Lord Jesus in and through them? Joseph must have sat down and said to himself, “*Despite the difficulties I'm going to make the most of this for God's glory.*” Are you really making the most of your days? Someone may say, “*Well, I don't really want to be single, I was hoping to be married by this time.*” Sure, but are you making the most of your singleness in the meantime? Are we married making the most of our marriages? Are all of us making the most of every opportunity for God's glory? (Eph 5:16) A story is told of two grasshoppers that were thrown into a pail of milk. The first grasshopper began immediately to sulk and give up, and he drowned in the milk. But the second grasshopper began to kick like crazy and work hard at getting out of the pail. ***In the process he churned the milk into butter, and then walked out of the pail on top of that block of butter.*** Put two people in the same jail and one will see only bars on the window, while the other will see the stars beyond the bars. Which would you see?

“*And his master saw that the Lord was with him.*” What a testimony for a young man in a foreign country. Do your employers or employees see Christ in you? Do your neighbours and friends see the Lord Jesus in you? Does your family see that God is with you? (a) (b)

(c) The Lord was PRESIDING over Him:

For did you notice that in (39:2) *Joseph prospered*, in (39:3) *Joseph's work prospered* and in (39:5) *Joseph's master prospered*. My it would be hard to find a greater progression through the ranks of prosperity than that of Joseph in Potiphar's household. The roller coaster of his life has plunged to the bottom of a pit, risen to the back of a camel, plunged again into Egypt, and now risen to an honoured position in Potiphar's house. Think of the things that Joseph now had.

- *Position:* “*he made overseer over his house,*”
- (39:4) Potiphar turned everything he had over to Joseph.
- *Power:* the more responsible Joseph became, the more power he gained.
- *Popularity:* I mean God blessed everything that Joseph touched and that meant that Pharaoh's house was blessed as well. Things had never been better since Joseph arrived.
- *Physique:* The Bible says, “*Joseph was a goodly person and well favoured.*” (39:6) He was well built and good looking. No doubt he had inherited some of his mother's good looks. (29:17)

You see, before Joseph faced *the test of purity*, he faced *the test of prosperity* and he passed with flying colours. We are all too familiar with the scene. You see, our biggest test is not when people criticise us, or persecute us, or when things are difficult our biggest test comes when we are successful. For again and again when a person does well, they forget the Lord, and the success that turns their head usually wrings their neck. Is that what has happened

to you ? Has God blessed you materially, financially, and vocationally ? (Deut 8:18) What have you given in return to Him ? In terms of your time, your treasure, your talents ? Isn't it amazing that God's blessing was upon a Gentile's home because of His child's presence ? Now will you replace Joseph's name with your own. " *The Lord blessed the church for Tom's sake, the Lord blessed the neighbours for Jean's sake, the Lord blessed the witness for John's sake.*" What has God blessed because of you ? Never forget that God for Christ's sake has saved and blessed us. Now do you see that God was for Joseph ?

(2) SATAN WAS AGAINST HIM

So often the blessings of God are followed with the battles of Satan. God's smile is followed by Satan's growl. You see, the devil has no difficulty in making sin look innocent for the devil is usually good looking. (2 Cor 11:14) The Bible says so. The subtlety of his attack on Joseph came through the eyes and words of Potiphar's wife. For while Mr. Potiphar is appreciating Joseph's business sense and trustworthy nature, Mrs. Potiphar is becoming increasingly preoccupied with Joseph's good looks and build. Look if you will at (32:7) ***Now let me state that there is nothing wrong with sex in and of itself.*** Do you recall that God pronounced all His creation " *very good,*" and this gift is a lovely expression of the mutual love between husband and wife. You see, this gift is to be reserved for the permanent, trusting, secure, relationship of marriage. (1 Cor 6:11-7:5) Young folk, the Lord forbids sex before marriage, (1 Cor 6:13) older folk the Lord forbids sex outside of marriage (Ex 20:14) People today speak of

safe sex. ***The only safe sex is within the confines of the marriage bond.*** Now this temptation that Joseph fought was a sexual one. It's the same temptation that son, that grandson of yours is facing. It's the same temptation that all of us face. Will you notice that this temptation,

(a) WAS PHYSICAL:

Now Egyptian women in those days enjoyed as much liberty as women do today. This is proven by the Egyptian monuments which speak of the extreme laxity of their morals. It may be that Potiphar's wife was not worse than many of her sex but her advances must have flattered Joseph's ego and aroused a powerful sensual temptation. The phrase " *cast her eyes on Joseph,*" means " *to have a burning desire to obtain.*" Normally, it's the man who is attracted by sight, not the woman. Normally it's the man who sets something in motion, not the woman, but here is young Joseph becoming the object of sexual overtures. Physical attraction. Is this not a familiar tool in temptation ? Do you recall what James says ? " *But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.*" (1:14) " *Enticed,*" is a fishing term and refers to the baiting of a hook. It speaks of that which entices and interests the fish and draws it to the hook. My is Satan enticing you through physical attraction.

" *After all,*" the Devil would probably whisper, " *why not ? No one knows you down here. Morals are free and easy in Egypt, go ahead, Joseph so long as you are not caught. After all it's natural for a young man to flirt with an attractive woman.*" Is the temptation that you're facing

physical ?

(b) WAS PERSISTENT:

She did not proposition him just once, but day by day. Someone has asked, “ *why is it that opportunity knocks only once, yet temptation bangs on the door constantly.* ” She kept after him day by day. Can you see her as Joseph comes around the corner. “ *Joseph, have you been thinking about me ? Come on Joseph, who’s to know ? How long has it been since you had a girlfriend ?* ” My if you’re living in the imaginary bubble that somehow temptation, once resisted, will vanish, burst it this very moment. “ *And it came to pass that as she speak unto Joseph day by day that he hearkened not unto her.* ” (39:10) This is what is pleasing to God. It is not simply that you say once, “ *I can’t do that,* ” but that you are so committed to Christ that if the temptation comes back again, and again, and again you say, “ *no, no, no.* ” 1. 2,

(c) WAS PRIVATE:

Isn’t it interesting that when we sin, we think as long as no one sees us, we’re ok but God sees us. And God was Joseph’s concern. “ *How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God ?* ” (39:9) My if Joseph’s only concern was that no one would find out, then this woman’s strategic approach to him, at a time when they were alone would have snared him.

(d) WAS POWERFUL:

For she “ *caught,* ” Joseph. The word means “ *to seize violently.* ” What a moment this was. Satan as it were had been calling and urging him to sin, but now the hand of temptation actually grips him. My have you ever felt the powerful pull of temptation ? Did you ever feel yourself in the grip of an evil force pulling you down ? Listen to these words of a martyred pastor,

In our members there is a slumbering inclination towards desire which is both sudden and fierce. With irresistible power desires seizes mastery over the flesh. All at once a secret smouldering fire is kindled. The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us.

Can you identify with those words ? Do you realise from experience that the power of temptation is intense ? How can we be overcomers ? What is the secret of victory ?

(3) FEAR WAS WITHIN HIM

Look if you will at (39:9) Here is the bottom line. Sin is an offence against God. Do you know something ? There is no more powerful force than overcoming temptation than the fear of God. The Bible says, “ *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* ” (Prov 9:10) This is not the servile fear of God that is the fear of a pagan. This is not the fear of what God will do to me, but the fear of what I, by my actions will do to Him, the fear of dragging down the Lord’s name. My Joseph feared God. Are we not breeding a generation even in the church, that gives

little thought to fearing God ? Meanwhile, immorality is rampant inside and outside the church, because we are letting go of a foundational principle that stands against immorality, which is the fear of God. You see, the issue for Joseph was not that adultery might hurt them, or that the news might get out. *The issue was that adultery with her would have been an act of wickedness against God.* That's why Joseph,

(a) RESISTED DECISIVELY:

He didn't argue with the temptress. His instinctive reaction was no. Why ? Because, he was walking with God, because he had rehearsed this answer in his mind many times before, because he had convictions before the crisis. *Do you what the first key to overcoming temptation is ?* Know what the answer is before the temptation presents itself. My if we don't know what we believe about money, sex, telling the truth, keeping our word, and all the other issues in life, which, in the world, can go either way, then we are likely to go the way of the world. Joseph had said **No** to himself many times before ever saying it to Potiphar's wife. (a)

(a) REFUSED BLUNTLY:

Look if you will at (39:8) Is this not encouragement for you when you remember these facts ?

1. Joseph was a virile young man.
2. This was happening every day.
3. There was the temptation to flattery.

“ Imagine one of the highest ranking women in Egyptian society and she wants me.”

4. There was the temptation for self-pity: He could have said, *“ I have been brought here against my will, I deserve this wee bit of pleasure.*

5. He could have thought, *“ If I don't give in to this woman she could take my life.”* You see, from the world's perspective everything was on the side of Joseph to say yes but he said no, and that for three reasons.

- **It was Personally Wrong:**

His master had committed everything into his hands and Joseph was concerned about his testimony before his master. Do you realise that your life is the only Bible that some well ever read ? *Do we ever take time to consider the cost if we say yes to certain temptations ?* It may cost us our testimony, our marriage, our position. It will bring pain and hurt.

- **It was Morally Wrong:**

“ Thou art his wife,” (39:9) He had respect for Potiphar's wife. When you look at another's wife or husband and say it is love compelling you, its not, its lust. Young folk, when someone of the opposite sex wants to commit sexual sin with you, and they tell you its love, its not, its lust.

- **It was Spiritually Wrong:**

“ How then and sin against God.” (39:9) To yield to

her advances would be a violation of God's law, but Joseph was not only concerned about breaking God's law, he was concerned about *breaking about God's heart*. "How then can I do this great wickedness," "I for whom Christ has died." "How then can I do this great wickedness," others call it "sowing wild oats, having a bit on the side, but I call it sin." "How then can I do this great wickedness?" "I love Him too much for that." My Joseph said "no," because of his love for the Lord. The fear of offending Him was the worst thing imaginable.

(c) RETREATED PURPOSEFULLY:

"He hearkened not unto her to lie by her or be with her," Paul says, "Make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Rom 13:14) That means, that if you have any idea where temptation will be, you won't go there. My we cannot let down our guard for one moment. The story is told of a hunter that raised his gun and took careful aim at a large bear. Just as he was about to pull the trigger, the bear spoke in a soft soothing voice. "Is it not better to talk than to shoot? What do you want? Let us negotiate the matter." Lowering his rifle, the hunter said, "I want a fur coat." "Good," said the bear "that is negotiable question. I only want a full stomach, so let us negotiate a compromise." They sat down to talk and after a time the bear walked away alone. The negotiations had been successful. The bear had a full stomach and the hunter had his fur coat. Do you know something? There can be no negotiating or compromise with sin. **You play with fire and you will get burnt. You pick up snakes and**

sooner or later you will get bit. (a) (b) (c)

(d) REACTED WISELY:

For when she grabbed him he ran. One old Puritan said, "he lost his coat but he retained his character. It can take thirty years to build a reputation and only five minutes to ruin it. No wonder Paul says, "Flee also youthful lusts." (2 Tim 2:22) That unsaved crowd that exerts such a godless influence, that magazine that so inflames the passion, that television programme, that so defiles the mind, that pornography that you are tinkering with on the internet, walk away from them. "Flee youthful lusts." Get out of there for if you stay you're likely to give in. Chuck Swindoll gave three great pieces of advice on how to deal with temptation. He said first of all, **expect it, secondly detect it, thirdly reject it.** Is this not what Joseph did? Will you do that?