

## **"FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM."**

GEN. 41:38-49. – OCT. 20.

**"Them that honor me, I will honor." – 1 Sam. 2:30.**

DIVINE FAVOR was the secret of Joseph's success, as it has been the secret of the success of all who have attained true greatness in the world. In previous ages true success was more or less identified with earthly prosperity, riches and power; but during this Gospel age – the spirit dispensation – true success and divine favor stand related to spiritual prosperity, attainments and usefulness, as exemplified in our Lord Jesus, in the Apostles, and in the less prominent servants of the Cross from their day until now. The principle is the same, though the mode of operation is different. Adversity is still the school in which the chief lessons in character-building are to be learned – in which the correct ideals of life are to be formed, and ultimately to be crystalized into fixed character. The story of Joseph's experiences, which in this lesson culminate in great advancement and blessing, illustrates the fact that God has to do not only with the shaping of national affairs, but also with the individual affairs of all who are "called according to his purpose," and who are seeking to live up to the requirements and conditions of that call.

It was probably because Joseph had some basis of character that the Lord chose to use him to prepare the way for his family to come into Egypt, etc. And we may be sure that had he proven neglectful of the lessons and experiences through which he passed the Lord would have changed or modified his dealings accordingly. As it was, the Lord's favors and blessings were evidently bestowed upon a worthy character, which, so far as we may judge from the record, responded obediently and trustfully in every trial. That Joseph's faith in the Lord was the

basis [R2887 : page 316] of his strength of character, fidelity to duty and to principle, there is no reason to question. Had he doubted the Lord's providence in his own case, as foreshadowed in his own dreams, he would have been inclined to say to his two princely prisoners, when they related their dreams, as recorded in the last lesson, that they should have no confidence in dreams, for he had proven their unreliableness to his own bitter chagrin, having dreamed of power and influence, and having received, instead, degradation, slavery, and imprisonment. But he evidently still believed in his dreams, still expected release in some manner, and believed that the Lord was overruling in his affairs.

Such a trust and confidence in the Almighty Ruler, as our Heavenly Father, is still more appropriate in us, the spiritual heirs of the Abrahamic promise; because we have much advantage every way over Joseph and others of our predecessors, who were heirs of only the natural blessings. Those who lived before Christ, no matter how high their station, at the very most were members of the "house of servants," while we of this Gospel age are freely recognized of God as sons, members of the "house of sons," of which our Lord Jesus is the Head. The sons not only are granted, through the holy spirit, deeper and clearer insight into the divine plan, but much advantage every way over the house of servants and over the world in general. Yet as with Joseph and the typical throne of Egypt, it is not sufficient that we should be favored of God and called to joint-heirship in the Kingdom of earth; but it is necessary that we shall prove submissive and tractable under his disciplines and instructions; that we may be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." It is necessary especially that our faith should be strong, and to this end that it should be tried, that it may be to the praise of his glory who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Joseph's confidence in his ultimate deliverance, and the fulfilment of God's promise, did not hinder him from doing all he could in a proper manner to effect his own deliverance. We notice how, after kindly treating the imprisoned butler, explaining his dream for him, and rejoicing with him in the prosperity intimated, he solicited that when the prince would again be in royal favor he would kindly remember that his comforter, Joseph, was still in prison, and if possible secure the royal pardon for him. It was proper that he should thus take reasonable steps toward his own liberty, and no doubt the two years longer that he remained in prison brought testings of his faith, of his trust in the Lord; for the butler seems to have forgotten him entirely when his prosperity returned. However, in all this, as we can now see, the Lord was caring for him. He was learning the lessons of patient endurance, of suffering for righteousness' sake, of faith in the Lord. Had he been released by royal decree and set at liberty, he might have gone back to hunt up his father and his brethren in Palestine; or he might have gotten immersed in business of some kind in Egypt; but under divine providence he was kept safely in prison, learning necessary lessons, until he was thirty years of age; and it was at this time that Pharaoh the king, having had two remarkable dreams, which seriously impressed themselves upon his mind, and having consulted the wise man of Egypt, could find no satisfactory solution for them. It was then that the butler bethought him of his own dream while in the prison, and of the wonderful young man there who had interpreted it so accurately, and whose kindness he had so quickly forgotten. Here was an opportunity of serving the king and serving his prisoner-friend; so he mentioned Joseph to Pharaoh in most complimentary terms. Thus we see illustrated the fact that kindnesses done to others, even though they seem to be quickly forgotten, may possibly return in blessing on our own heads later on, and be used of the Lord as channels of blessing.

Pharaoh called for the prisoner, and the explanation of his dreams was so thoroughly satisfactory that he could not doubt their truthfulness, and corroborated by the testimony of the butler, he concluded that Joseph's ability as an interpreter resided in the fact that God was with him; that God was using him; and that in some manner or other the God who had given these dreams, and such an interpretation to so remarkable a young man, would be pleased to bless and to use his servant still further in connection with the precautions to be taken to avert the severity of the famine predicted. Pharaoh was possessed of autocratic power, and was at liberty to exalt whom he would to authority in his kingdom, and very wisely he concluded that none could be more safe to trust than the one whom the Almighty trusted and made his friend; – the one to whom and through whom he revealed the secrets of knowledge. There is a lesson [**R2888 : page 316**] of wisdom here for the Lord's people and for all – to the effect that although the Lord's people may not be perfect, it is safer, in an emergency, to trust those whom the Lord has trusted than any others.

Joseph was at once made what we to-day would call Prime Minister of Egypt. He was the representative of Pharaoh, and as such had greater power than any monarch or Prime Minister of Europe, except the Czar of Russia and the Sultan of Turkey or their representatives. Many have inclined to doubt the possibility of such an exaltation from prison to second place in the throne; but such are not sufficiently familiar with the customs of eastern countries. A story, for instance, is told of the Sultan of Turkey, that one day having a severe toothache, and his usual dentist being absent from the city, his servants were sent to get any dentist they could find. They found one in comparative poverty, clothed him suitably to be presented to the Sultan, who, after he had performed the service, gave him the title and emoluments of Pasha, with both a city and a country residence, wealth, etc. Joseph's experience was not much more extreme than this.

Doubtless, though the narrative does not show it, some explanations were offered respecting his previous character as Potiphar's servant, and as the trusty overseer in prison; satisfying Pharaoh's mind that he was an honorable man, worthy of confidence and trust, besides the attestations of divine favor. So there is likely to be in all of our affairs a time of change, in which, if we have been misunderstood and misrepresented, the truth will ultimately be brought forth, as the Lord **[R2888 : page 317]** declares, "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." (Psa. 37:6.) We are to wait patiently for the Lord, and to take patiently such experiences as his providences may mark out for us, questioning not the wisdom, the love and the power of him with whom we have to do – of him who has promised that all things shall work for our everlasting welfare, if we abide faithful to him.

Pharaoh's ring was a signet ring. In ancient times royal commands were not signed and sealed, as at present, but sealed only, the monarch having a peculiar seal which, wherever it went, was recognized as his, and to have counterfeited which would have been gross felony, punishable with death. It was this seal that was given to Joseph, that by and through the authority expressed in it he might issue such commands as he pleased in respect to the accumulation and building of granaries and storing in the same part of the surplus crop of the seven years of plenty.

The honor and distinction of Joseph as next to Pharaoh seems well to illustrate the glorious exaltation of our Lord Jesus (in which the church, as his body, will soon share). Our Lord was tested, yet notwithstanding his faithfulness he went into the great prison-house of death; on the third day was delivered and raised up to power and great glory, and to be next to Jehovah God in the throne of the universe. The divine signet was given to him, and the proclamation was that "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father," and that nothing should be done

except at his command – that all power in heaven and in earth was committed unto him. (John 5:23; Matt. 28:18.) The faithful members of the elect body of Christ, the Church, the overcomers, must also be tried in various ways, and for righteousness' sake must suffer in the present time, be misunderstood, misrepresented, etc. These also must go into the prison-house of death, and be therein parts of three great days (thousand-year days), a part of the fifth thousand, all of the sixth thousand, and early in the seventh thousand years, or third thousand-year day, their resurrection is due; that they may become joint-heirs with Christ their Lord and Head, in the glorious things of the Kingdom. All this was well marked by the parts of three years which Joseph spent in prison, and his subsequent exaltation.

The meaning of the new, Egyptian, name given to Joseph is rather in dispute, Canon Cooke claiming that it means "Bread of Life." It was appropriate in view of the great work which Joseph accomplished – the accumulation of a great store of wheat during the years of plenty, – sufficient to supply the necessities of the whole people during the seven years of famine. In this respect again we are reminded of Christ, who called himself the "Bread of Life." We are reminded, too, that it was through a work which he accomplished that the living bread is provided, for the whole world of mankind typified by the Egyptians; and that through him also the bread of life comes to his brethren, typified by Joseph's brethren and Jacob. As there was no life for all the people there except through Joseph and his work, and as Joseph did his work as the agent or representative of Pharaoh, so we see, as an anti-type, that there is no life for anyone of the world except in and through Christ Jesus our Lord, and that his work is accomplished in the name of, and as the representative of our Heavenly Father, the supreme ruler of the universe.

Some are always ready to make objection and to find fault, rather than to make reasonable explanations, and some such

object to Joseph's course in collecting one-fifth of the harvest of the plentiful years, and using it later on to strengthen the authority of Pharaoh and his control over all the people of his realm. We might say that even the one-fifth of the crop increase might not be considered an unreasonable tax, as it is the usual amount of rental charged in that vicinity to-day, and even more than that is frequently charged here and elsewhere in civilized countries; but we do not know that the one-fifth was exacted from the people as a tax. We do not know that Pharaoh's purse and bank account were not drawn upon for the purpose of this storage-wheat at the low price which would prevail during a period of such great surplus. We shall presume the latter, in the absence of any information to the contrary; and as for using this to strengthen the authority of the throne, and the contrariness of this from all democratic ideas, we have nothing to say except that it remains to be proven that a republican form of government is in all respects the best for *fallen* humanity. The Lord does not propose as a remedy for present ills, social, political, moral, etc., to introduce a Millennium along the lines of a republic; but he does propose its introduction along the lines of a monarchy – an absolute monarchy, in which his Son, who redeemed the world, will reign to bless the world by the exercise of autocratic power; for the subjugation of evil; for the bringing of all mankind into full appreciation of the principles of righteousness, and, so far as they will, into full accord with the great supreme ruler, Jehovah – that they shall be his subjects forever, as the people of Egypt typically became the perpetual servants of Pharaoh.

As Pharaoh gave to Joseph a wife, named Asenath (signifying "Favor"), and she became Joseph's associate in honor and dignity, and co-laborer and helpmate with him in his work of blessing Egypt, so Jehovah God proposes a bride for his exalted Son, our Lord, and she also will be a favorite. It has required all of this Gospel age for her betrothal and preparation for the marriage, and the time is now nigh at hand when she shall

be brought near to the King, as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, adorned in the glorious linen robe of her Lord, fitly embroidered with the elements of character which he can approve. – Psa. 45:13,14.

Joseph's head was not turned by the prosperity which came to him; he showed himself worthy of it – that he had profited by previous experiences, so as to know how to use the prosperity wisely. He was not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit; and seeing that the Lord had opened the way before him we find him immediately taking steps to carry out his mission. His first move was to travel throughout the lengths and breadths of Egypt, to determine the most eligible sites for the building of granaries, or storehouses; and the Lord's blessing continued with him and prospered him in the work thus given him to do. **[R2888 : page 318]** So it should be with us; in whatever department of the Lord's service he is pleased to open the door of opportunity to us, we should enter it promptly and with energy – with zeal for him and for the cause to which he has called us. This is one condition of our acceptableness with him. If we are slothful, inattentive to opportunities, undoubtedly they will be removed from us, and given to others, for the Lord is abundantly able to raise up one or another to serve his cause without interfering with, or overruling our free moral agency. Let us more and more appreciate what a privilege we enjoy in being co-laborers together with God, and especially in connection with this great service which our Lord and Master Jesus is executing, and to fellowship in which we have been called, as his bride and joint-heir.

They that honor God he will honor, in his own way; and his way will always be found eventually to be the best way. We not only are to honor the Lord by word of mouth, but especially are we to show forth his praises in the affairs of life – in connection with home duties, business duties, service of the truth: in all



things we are to glorify him in our bodies and **[R2889 : page 318]** spirits which are his; and those who thus do shall be blessed indeed of the Lord and be used of him. The slightest service here permitted us is an honor indeed, and faithfulness in these slight services of the present time are eventually to be blessed and rewarded with the greater and grander service of the Kingdom.

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