



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 39:7-12: Potiphar's Wife Attempts to Seduce Joseph

And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

10 So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.

11 But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, 12 that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside."

Background Notes

Joseph was brought down to Egypt by Midianite traders and sold as a slave to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials. But the Lord was with Joseph, and He blessed him, and it wasn't long before Joseph was elevated to a position of overseer of Potiphar's entire estate. In verse 5 we read, *"So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field."*

So the Lord blessed Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he owned. But trouble was moving on the horizon, because verses 6-7 tell us, *"Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. 7 And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."*

The event in these verses was probably not the first time that Potiphar's wife had tried something like this, and she probably had been successful with other men. Furthermore, because Joseph was one of Potiphar's slaves, she probably considered Joseph her property; and thought she could do whatever she wanted with him. But Joseph resisted and refused her suggestion. Unlike Judah, and unlike King David later, Joseph did not sin in this area.

"So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her"(v10). Notice that this temptation was not a one-time event. And Joseph didn't assume that because this situation had happened a number of times, "Oh, it must be God's will." Did you know that some Christians operate like that? If something happens enough times, they assume that "God must be speaking!" What kind of crazy reasoning is that? Satan would love to have you think like that, because he comes again and again with the same temptations.

In verse 11, it appears that Potiphar's wife arranged a situation where no one would be in the house, and she grabbed Joseph and said, "Lie with me!" But once gain Joseph resisted and ran away, even though he had to leave his coat in her hands. Notice he didn't say, "OK, I tried to resist, but since you are my boss, I have to obey you." No way! Joseph knew that this was sin -- sin against his own body, sin against Potiphar's wife, sin against Potiphar, and most importantly, sin against God (v.9). So Joseph resisted and fled, in the strength of the Lord.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Bible does not teach "situation ethics."

"Situation ethics" is a system of ethics in which actions are evaluated within a situational context, rather than by moral absolutes. Situation ethics says that you should always do the most "helpful" thing or the most "loving" thing, from your perspective, in any given situation. Now if ever God wanted to teach situation ethics, the Joseph story would be the perfect place. This is how situation ethics might reason here. Joseph was far from home, with seemingly no chance for marriage. He was in his late twenties now, and as a man, Joseph had certain needs, and these needs were God-given, because God created us with sexual drive. And there was Potiphar's wife, apparently involved in an unhappy marriage, and she had certain needs, too. So why not go ahead? Wouldn't that be the **loving** thing to do? No one would need to know, and no one would need to get hurt. Would it really be a sin, between two consenting adults, especially if Joseph was just taking orders from Potiphar's wife, who owned him as a slave? And after all, if he didn't consent, he might be thrown into prison. Certainly the most helpful and most loving action to take in this situation would be to go ahead and consent. Right? **Wrong!** The Bible does **not** teach situation ethics! This would be **sin**, regardless of the situation. Joseph had the right view, because he lived by **biblical ethics**.

Now what about us? Situation ethics is very appealing to human reasoning. Sometimes it seems that the most helpful thing to do, or the most loving thing to do, is to go against God's standards -- not all the time of course, we might say, but just in certain situations when there are extenuating circumstances. **Don't** fall for that snare of Satan! Obey God. Keeping God's standards is **always** the most helpful and the most loving thing to do in **all** situations. Adultery is never right, fornication is never right, immorality is never right. The Bible does **not** teach situation ethics!

2. The Bible does teach "situation testing."

God allowed Joseph to be in this tempting situation. Joseph was being tested. Listen to the words of Psalm 105:16-19, in reference to Joseph: *"He[God] called for a famine in the land; He destroyed all the provision of bread. 17 He sent a man before them— Joseph—who was sold as a slave. 18 They hurt his feet with fetters; he was laid in irons. 19 Until the time that His word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him."* Notice that "the word of the Lord" tested Joseph through all of these circumstances. God allowed the tests in Joseph's life. It was a test of Joseph's faith, and a preparation for future service.

To be tempted is not sin. Our Lord was tempted, and He never sinned. It's when we **yield** to temptation -- that is sin. God is not the author of temptation. Read James 1 in that connection, particularly verse.13. God is not the author of temptation, but God allows temptation to come to us as a test of our faith, and as a test of our faithfulness.

We can be sure that, as believers, we will be put in situations where we will be tested. Maybe the test will be in the same area as Joseph. A number of years ago, I was standing in the lobby of a large hotel, and an attractive woman came up to me. She said, "Sir, do you have the time?" When I looked up from my watch, she had put her fingers under the lapel of my jacket, and then she said, "How would you like to go to my room, and discuss the time?" [Interesting -- everyone looked up as I gave this illustration, for some reason!] Well, guess what biblical passage flashed through my mind at that point? You guessed it -- Genesis 39! So I instinctively grabbed my coat and quickly walked away. When I told Margie about this later, she said, "I'm glad you didn't have to leave your expensive jacket behind when you ran away!"

I'm sure many of you could share experiences where God has allowed you to be in such situations, where he has allowed you to be tested in all kinds of areas. James 1 says that we are strengthened spiritually, as well as rewarded, when we pass the test. So remember, the Bible doesn't teach situation ethics, but it does teach situation testing.

Practical Applications

1. It's better to flee than fall!

Joseph did the right thing. He fled, even though meant losing his coat. This is the way we are to resist in the area of sexual temptation. In 2 Timothy 2:22 says, "*Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*" And 1 Corinthians 6:18 says, "*Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.*"

Sexual temptation is a very powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal, because it appeals to a natural God-given desire. But sexual activity outside of marriage is out of the bounds that God has defined as His standards. Many Christian leaders have fallen in this area because they didn't flee the situation. Oh, they may have started to flee, but then they stopped running, and the temptation caught up with them. We should pray for our Christian leaders, that God will give them the strength to flee compromising situations. And of course this applies to every single one of us as well. We need to **flee** from these kinds of situations.

Whether it is in the area of sex, or any other fleshly desire, the biblical principle of doing battle is to **flee**. No matter how strong you feel, or how mature you are, **flee!** The biblical way to resist temptation in this area is to run. Don't even hang around to witness! Notice Joseph didn't say "Well, let's sit down and I'll explain the gospel to you." No, you **flee!**

Notice that Joseph began to practice this principle of "fleeing" even before the event where Potiphar's wife grabbed his coat. Look at verse 10, "*So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.*" He avoided her as much as possible!

Sexual sin is not irresistible. **Avoid** and **flee** is the biblical way to combat this powerful temptation. It's better to flee than to fall!

2. Maybe we should thank the Lord, if we are ugly.

As I look around this audience, you are a good looking bunch here at church this morning. But just in case you think that God has not blessed you with the greatest "form and features package," remember this practical application: Maybe we should thank the Lord if we are ugly. Notice the end of verse 6: "*Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.*" I can assure you that Potiphar's wife would not have tried to seduce an ugly Joseph. Agreed? I think you see the lesson.

Seriously speaking, there is a built-in vulnerability as well as great responsibility that go along with good looks and talent. If the Lord has given you good looks or a special talent, you can thank the Lord, but recognize that you have a responsibility to use these things for the **His** glory. And recognize that you may well be tested in the same area as Joseph was.

The good news here is that we don't have to fail when we're tested. God says in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*" God gives the means to resist every temptation and pass every test. We don't have to fail!

The other good news, of course, is that when we do fail (and maybe there have been some failures here), God does pick up the pieces. But having said all that, when we think it through, and when we think of all the bad fallout that comes with failure, and how prone we are to fail, then maybe, just maybe, we should thank the Lord if we are ugly.