

Having Moral Integrity before God

Genesis 39:1-23

“As long as you and I are in the world, we must serve God first and hope that in pleasing him and receiving his blessings we also please men and women and find their favor. Joseph pursued this course and obtained this result for eleven years. For most of us this is the story of a lifetime. But let us observe that there are times when it is not possible to serve or please both God and man. When that happens, we must be clear in our minds that we are to please God first of all and then actually choose for him whatever the consequences. Enoch was undoubtedly despised by his contemporaries; he was certainly ridiculed. Joseph was unjustly slandered and wrongly imprisoned; for the space of two years, he was forgotten. But these men stood for God and were vindicated in due time.

We need a generation of men and women like that today. We need Christians who serve humanity as they serve Jesus, but who serve Jesus above all and listen for his commendation: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’” (Matt. 25:23) Boice

- I. *We know from chapter 37 that Joseph was thrown away by his brothers like a piece of garbage. They hated him, were jealous of him, and wanted to kill him. He was 64 miles from home when they laid a hold of him, violently stripped him of his colored tunic, and cold heartedly threw him into an empty cistern at Dothan before they sat down to eat. Providentially, a caravan was passing by and instead of killing him they sold him, and Joseph found himself at seventeen a slave going to a country he knew nothing about. His young life was radically changed in the course of just a couple of hours because of hatred, bitterness and jealousy. We know from chapter 42 that Joseph pleaded for his life, but his brothers ignored him. “Joseph possessed every human reason for distrust and bitterness. Common logic commanded that he cherish and nurture thoughts of revenge. In fact, feeding on such thoughts could sustain him, as they once had done for his Uncle Esau (cf. 27:42). But Joseph made a different choice, a most remarkable choice, because as he shuffled through the dust of Egypt, he chose to trust God with his life and ultimately to forgive. This is astonishing but true, because a CAT scan of his soul reveals no spiritual malignancies anywhere. There is not a trace of the cancers of hatred or bitterness or vindictiveness no matter how close we look.” (Hughes)*

Eph. 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

- II. God's blessing on everything Joseph did is a theme that runs throughout chapter 39. It is repeated seven times for emphasis, which tells us that Joseph's outlook on life, his biblical worldview, was very important to him in how he lived his life. We see that Joseph's relationship with God was more important to him than the godless circumstances that plunged him into a difficult and uncertain future. It is seen in how others viewed him (his affect), in how he saw himself as a child of God, and in how God blessed others because of his faith. His example of living in the freedom of forgiveness shows us that without true forgiveness there can be no true moving on to not only agape love the Lord, but to also agape love others. Joseph's ability to forgive affected his whole outlook on life, which means he didn't sulk, carry a chip on his shoulder, have an attitude or feel like he was owed anything. Consequently, God honored him by prospering him in righteousness.

Gen. 29:1-6a

Col. 3:13

Isa. 26:3-4 You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal.

- III. One of the things we come to realize early on is that there will always be challenges to our moral integrity before the Lord. They always come in the form of temptations, which are allurements that entice us to want to embrace, enjoy, love, or bow down to whatever is tempting us. The ones that are the most dangerous involve the moral absolutes of Scripture. It's where the rubber meets the road Christianity. I have a choice to make, God's way or my way, the world's way or God's way, the way of righteousness or the way of the flesh. Temptation's purpose is to wreck our faith, to devastate it and once devastated, to keep us from the freedom of repentance and the joy of forgiveness. The environment God placed Joseph in provided him with many opportunities to bow down to his sin nature, yet he made a conscious decision to remain faithful to God no matter what the consequences might bring. The concept of having moral integrity before the Lord is something that can be applied to almost every area of our lives. It should be a core value, a key part of what it means to love the Lord and others. To have moral integrity honors the Lord and represents Christ well to a world in need of trust, honesty, God's love, a stand for righteousness and the light of the gospel.

Gen. 39:6b-20

James 1:13-14

Prov. 4:23

Heb. 12:1-2

1 Peter 2:12

1 Cor 10:13

Heb. 10:37-39

1 Cor. 6:18-19

Ps. 105:17b-19

"I notice two things particularly. Joseph continued to think about God and indeed, to orient his entire life around the reality of God's character." Boice.