

GOD PORTRAYS WOMEN

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

MRS. POTIPHAR

Genesis 39

“TEACH ME TO DO thy will; for thou art my God” (Psalm 143:10) was the verse Dr. Grenfell’s mother wrote in the Bible she gave her son. As we read Genesis 39 we would almost think old Jacob must have given this verse to be the motto for Joseph’s life. He deliberately chose one thing, that was to please God whatever the circumstance.

“And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites which had brought him down thither. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field. And he left all he had in Joseph’s hand” (39:1-6).

The hatred of Joseph’s brethren had made him an exile. But God has His eye on those whom men despise. God was able to make something of the friendless boy. **“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up”** (Psalm 27:10).

The homeless are God’s special care. As Joseph jostled along on the camel, the only one to whom he could speak was God. Something very deep and stabilizing happened to him between the pit from which he was taken by his brothers to be sold and his arrival in Egypt. He never lost consciousness of the very real presence of the Lord with him.

Over and over again in this chapter we have the words, **“And the Lord was with him.”** Are you right with God and do you consciously enjoy Him?

Stephen says in Acts 7:9-10 **“And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.”**

As Potiphar who was a shrewd businessman, looked at that clean-faced, clear-eyed boy on the auction block, he knew that he would be a good investment. Joseph was no mere time-server, watching the clock and “punching out” before the bell had stopped ringing. He was not like the seaman who, when asked by the mate, “How long have you been working in this compartment?” replied, “Ever since I saw you coming down the ladder.”

Shame on anyone who calls himself a Christian who begrudges any extra time to his employer and only thinks of what money he is getting out of it and not of promoting the welfare of the business. Does your employer prosper because you are there? Do you work heartily or grumble over everything, pay included? **“Be content with your wages,”** was one of John the Baptist’s texts to the soldiers who were chronic grumblers. Is your employer perfectly at ease when he has committed things to your care?

His master saw the Lord was with him. Joseph did not try to impress Potiphar by long religious speeches. He served him; he was not afraid of work. Whatever you are doing, let your heart be in your work as a thing done for the Lord and not for men. **“Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”** (I Corinthians 10:31).

Christian students should not hand in sloppy work or be content with low grades. That is not to the glory of God. Nothing short of excellence should characterize the work of the child of God whether in the school, kitchen, office or factory. Is your boss conscious of the presence of the Lord with you? Be a Joseph for the man who employs you. **“The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand”** (Isaiah 53:10). Work is honorable. The Lord was a carpenter. Paul, the world’s greatest missionary, worked at his trade to support himself and those who were with him. **“Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful”** (Titus 3:14).

Joseph had ability and agreeableness acceptable to those around him. He was adaptable except to evil. He earned the unlimited confidence and good graces of Potiphar. He was grateful for such implicit trust and was a loyal servant. **“And the Lord blessed Potiphar for Joseph’s sake.”** Is anyone blessed for your sake? Can people say of you, “Thank God for that Christian! He’s helped me today”? A whole shipload of people were saved for Paul’s sake. Every Christian is blessed for Jesus’ sake.

“And Joseph was a goodly person and well favored” (v. 6).

The Koran gives a whole chapter to the description of Joseph. It tells us that he was “the most accomplished, pious, and beautiful of mortals.” He had been tested in adversity and prosperity. Now the favor and flattery of society was to try him. Many a man of apparent integrity in business falls before social inducements.

The one who sought his downfall was none other than Potiphar’s wife. She was a thoroughly unscrupulous woman and more dangerous to society than the deadliest plague. The trial was aggravated by the constancy of her solicitations and flatteries. Joseph lived in the same house, was obligated to her husband, and sought in all things to please his master.

We read those noble words, “**He refused.**”

First refusals are not enough, we may succumb at last under persistent solicitation. Girls too need moral stamina, lest they be swerved from the right way by the attentions of men. Joseph had seen discord at home over domestic triangles and he purposed in his heart that he would never be the occasion of a shipwrecked home. We never know what day we may be tested as to personal purity nor by whom. Sometimes innocence is the result of social seclusion rather than moral character and virtue. The atmosphere of luxury and laxity offers grave moral dangers.

When he first refused he gave four reasons for declining her overtures.

- (1) “**My master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand.**” My master trusts me, and I will not disappoint his trust, I am loyal to him.
- (2) “**Thou art his wife.**”

How those few short words should have stung her and reminded her of her obligation to her husband, and of the sanctity of marriage! He did not overlook the consequences of sin on others. She belonged to her husband only.

- (3) “**How can I do this wickedness?**” It is unworthy of a child of God.
- (4) “**How can I sin against God?**” It would be an affront to God after all He has been and means to me.

This courageous, attractive young man might have said: “**I have set the Lord always before me**” (Psalm 16:8). Herein lay his strength. He realized too his safety was in avoidance of the woman. He hearkened not to her and he would not be with her. Do not be foolish and put yourself in the way of temptation. Flee youthful lusts; with praying Christians.

Follow righteousness, love, faith and peace. He applied himself diligently to his master’s business. But the temptress was very wily; “**her ways are devious**” (Proverbs 5:6) or movable; her lips are as an honeycomb, “**her mouth is smoother than oil, but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell**” (Proverbs 5:3-5).

Piqued by his avoidance and refusal, she sought to lay hold of him, seizing him by the coat. He was wiser to lose his coat than his reputation. “**He fled and got him out.**” Safety is in the heels, the greater the distance the better. “**Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, tarry not in all the plain**” was said to Lot when he was in an evil place.

Chagrined by his rebuff, Mrs. Potiphar became hateful and vindictive. “**Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.**” Joseph lost his garment but kept a good conscience. He attained to holiness through fear of God. “**Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck**” (I Timothy 1:19). Her advances scorned, she turned to persecution.

She called her servants and rehearsed what she planned to tell her husband. Her reference to her husband was only “he.” **“See he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us”** (v. 14). A sinful woman is disrespectful and has no scruples about lying and misrepresenting others.

Poor Joseph seemed to have trouble with his coats. This was the second time his coat was used for circumstantial evidence.

Jacob truly said of Joseph, **“The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him”** (49:23); first his brothers, then Mrs. Potiphar. They were fairly good marksmen with their cruel arrows of envy and hatred.

“And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, that his wrath was kindled” (v. 19).

It does not say he was angry with Joseph. The very fact that he did not kill his slave, which was customary for such an offense, is very significant.

He was evidently suspicious of her conduct and morals. Yet for appearance sake and to save face, something must be done. So Joseph was put into the same prison with the king’s prisoners. He acted as Pilate did, who knew the Lord was without fault yet for expediency he delivered Him to be crucified.

Joseph committed his way unto the Lord and trusted Him to deliver him. He felt keenly the unjust slander; in prison he suffered for righteousness’ sake. His faith was tried as with fire but was found unto the praise and honor and glory of God. **“If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf”** (I Peter 4:16).

Psalm 105:17-19 makes a telling comment on this period of Joseph’s life. **“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him.”**

Sometimes God’s appointed time seems long in coming, but never let us let down the shield of faith or confidence in God, nor allow our souls to become dour and bitter. God vindicated His servant before all. **“The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people and let him go free”** (Psalm 105:20).

Yes, God can make our righteousness to shine as the noonday when we fret not, trust in the Lord, do good, delight ourselves in the Lord, and commit our way to the Lord. We can indeed rest and wait patiently for Him. He can attend to the evildoers and look after our honor. Not only did the king loose him but **“he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom”** (w. 21-22).

Those prison days seemed hard, but Joseph did not waste his time in self-pity and injured innocence. Though numbered with transgressors, he set about seeking to improve conditions where he was and cheer the downcast souls he was set to serve.

The gaoler and the prisoners alike were aware that the Lord was with him. Joseph had a heart at leisure from himself to soothe and sympathize. Potiphar, who clapped him into prison at his wanton wife's instigation, had to loose him from those bars at the commandment of the king.

He stepped from the gaol, a justified and honored man, to the second place in the kingdom.

God's approval meant everything to Joseph. His purity was not the result of home shelter but intrinsic moral courage and stamina produced by the fear of the Lord. Don't be afraid to refuse to do evil.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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