

• *Joseph's tough training*

### 1. God's training involved a mixture of pain and comfort.

Joseph was being trained. His cushy, easy life as his father's favourite had come to an abrupt end and now he was a slave in the household of Potiphar. It was painful but it was all part of God's training for Joseph.

1. **God's training involved a mixture of pain and comfort.** When God is training us, for a while we feel that God is against us. 'Why is this happening to me?' we say. But then it becomes clear to us that God is still with us. God knows how to mix troubles and comforts. Joseph is a slave. He was owned by Potiphar <sup>1</sup>. His comfortable life is lost for ever. But God was with him <sup>2</sup>. It was obvious to Potiphar that he had acquired an unusual man <sup>3</sup> and soon he gave over the running of the household to Joseph <sup>4</sup>. When Potiphar prospered more than ever <sup>5</sup>, he gave Joseph full control of almost everything in the household <sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 39:1  
<sup>2</sup> 39:2  
<sup>3</sup> 39:3  
<sup>4</sup> 39:4  
<sup>5</sup> 39:5  
<sup>6</sup> 39:6a

• *God seemed to have betrayed him*

Joseph's experience was a mixture. Initially it must have been a very embittering situation. He must have felt sharply the injustice of his brothers' wickedness. God seemed to have betrayed him. In his dreams his brothers had been bowing down to him but they were not bowing down just yet.

• *Yet he was gaining rich experience*

Yet mixed in with the sufferings there was a certain amount of satisfaction. Joseph was clearly a capable administrator and the strange workings of God were giving him rich experience.

### 2. Joseph's integrity was tested.

2. **Joseph's integrity was tested.** He was handsome <sup>1</sup>. Potiphar's wife begins to give sexual invitations to Joseph <sup>2</sup>. He refuses. It would be ingratitude towards Potiphar <sup>3</sup>; it would be taking the one thing Potiphar has withheld <sup>4</sup>; it would be sin against God <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 39:6b  
<sup>2</sup> 39:7  
<sup>3</sup> 39:8–9a  
<sup>4</sup> 39:9b  
<sup>5</sup> 39:9c

• *Severe temptation – resisted – then ran*

The temptation must have been severe. He was a young man with the normal temptations of young men. He was a long way from home. The temptation was persistent <sup>1</sup>. One day Potiphar's wife was exceptionally insistent <sup>2</sup>. But throughout the entire situation Joseph was a model in his resisting temptation. He said 'no' <sup>3</sup>; he gave clear reasons why he was saying 'no' <sup>4</sup>. He remained firm despite constant pressure <sup>5</sup>. He would not put himself in a situation where temptation was close (*'he did not listen'* nor would he *'be with her'*). Finally he ran far from her when she was insistent <sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 39:10  
<sup>2</sup> 39:11–12a  
<sup>3</sup> 39:8  
<sup>4</sup> 39:8–9  
<sup>5</sup> 39:10  
<sup>6</sup> 39:11–13

### 3. He was tested by extreme injustice

3. **He was tested by extreme injustice.** One might think that after his withstanding temptation God would reward Joseph, but the conflict did not get better; it got worse. Being rejected by Joseph brings about extreme hatred. First she wants him; then she hates him. She calls in the men of the house <sup>1</sup> and blames her husband. In doing so she reveals that she does not have a good relationship with her husband <sup>2</sup>. No wonder she has been looking to Joseph for pleasure. She puts forward her own deceitful version of what has happened <sup>3</sup> slandering Joseph and portraying him in the worst possible light. It all shows she had no love for him, despite her invitations.

<sup>1</sup> 39:14  
<sup>2</sup> 39:15  
<sup>3</sup> 39:16–19

• *The situation gets worse - a victim of Potiphar's deceit*

• *Unable to defend himself*

Joseph must have felt greatly the ill-treatment he was getting. He had shown great faithfulness towards God and toward his master. But all the reward he gets is slander. He is quite unable to defend himself. The evidence points against him. The woman has his cloak in her hands. He has no way of proving his version of what has happened. It is quite

impossible for him to defend himself.

• *The ability to withstand slander – part of his preparation*

• *Imprisoned*

**God knows how to mix troubles and comforts**

• *Sufferings and testings are necessary - they teach us to rely on God*

• *God sets limits to our troubles*

• *The greater the calling, the greater the training*



In a strange way this too is part of Joseph’s training. Anyone who is going to be used by God is not going to get praise from the world, and he or she is likely to get a lot of false rumours and false stories. Early in one’s life one needs to get used to withstanding slander. There is nothing Joseph can do.

Potiphar’s wife tells her version of the story, and Potiphar is furious <sup>☞1</sup>. Perhaps however he did not altogether believe his wife’s story because Joseph was not put to death, as could easily have happened. Instead he is put into the private dungeon of Pharaoh and his officials <sup>☞2</sup>.

**God knows how to mix troubles and comforts.** It is God’s plan to allow troubles to come upon His people. We do not like sufferings and testings but we need them. *‘We... rejoice in tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance...’* <sup>☞1</sup>. It is necessary for us to be trained and humbled and driven to rely on God. But at the same time God knows how to limit our troubles so that they do not entirely crush us. Just as God had given favour in the house of Potiphar, God now gave him favour in the prison of Pharaoh <sup>☞2</sup>. And what happened in Potiphar’s house also happened in Pharaoh’s prison. Joseph soon became the chief administrator of the entire prison. Handling prisoners was a more difficult matter than handling the possessions of Potiphar. It was the same area of training; Joseph was an administrator. But the level of training was now higher. God was preparing Joseph for the day when he would be administering the entire land of Egypt <sup>☞3</sup> (41:41).

God was training Joseph for ministry. Every Christian has a ministry and we can expect God to supervise our lives so that we get training for what God is planning to do through us. It will often involve painful situations. Yet in the situations He puts us in, we shall find that we get practise in what He intends to give us as our calling in life. The greater the calling, the greater the training.

- ☞1 39:19
- ☞2 39:20
- ☞1 Romans 5:3
- ☞2 39:21
- ☞3 41:41

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