

Part 104

Skilful Leadership (47:13–31)

- After years of training - Joseph rises to power

1. Joseph refused to take glory for himself

- Rose to a position of absolute power under Pharaoh

- Remained uncorrupted

- Happy to remain second to Pharaoh

- A picture of the way we should relate to Jesus

- Jesus lived this way – honour to the Father

- Supreme honour to the Father – we live in the overflow

2. Joseph became a model of power used wisely and generously

- Content to be slaves

Now we discover how Joseph rose to very great power indeed. God had given him years of training both in his own character and in his ministry as a wise administrator. Now his skill shows itself as he becomes the administrator of the whole land of Egypt.

1. Joseph refused to take glory for himself. He was an ideal servant for Pharaoh because he brought very great profit and glory to Pharaoh and took none of it for himself. Many of God's servants want to take glory to themselves. Joseph had been like that in his teenage years. But now he had lost that self-glorifying spirit. He did what he did for Pharaoh.

Because of the neediness of the people^{¶1} Joseph rose to absolute power. He required that the grain which he had stored should be bought, rather than be given away. First the people gave money^{¶2}, then they paid in livestock^{¶3}. Soon the livestock of the entire land belonged to Pharaoh. Then the people had no choice but to offer their lands and their freedom to Pharaoh^{¶4}. Joseph gave food in return for land^{¶5} and the people of Egypt went wherever Joseph sent them^{¶6}. His wife's family were exempt^{¶7}; Joseph was married to a priest's daughter. A position of such great power was dangerous. Few men can rule an entire nation with such power in the way that Joseph did without that power becoming corrupting. But Joseph used the power that he had for the service of another. He got a lot of honour but he was happy to remain second to Pharaoh. He did what he did for Pharaoh and was happy to live this way.

We should relate in this way to Jesus. The 'glory' we get for anything we do must not be stolen and taken for ourselves. Anything we do for God is not for ourselves. It is for Jesus. We are to be happy to have His name glorified.

Jesus Himself lived this way. He was content to do the will of the Father who sent Him. He said again and again that He was simply doing what God had sent Him to do. He was content that the honour should go to the Father. When God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name that is above every name, it was '*to the glory of God the Father*'.

God rewards us with honour. But it is what I call 'second grade honour'. The supreme honour goes to the Father; we live in the overflow of the honour that comes to Him. Our honour is to share His honour.

2. Joseph became a model of power used wisely and generously. Very great power came to him. Yet he used what power came to him in a way that ministered to the critical need of the people. He provided the seed for them to plant. He insisted that the seed should be used rather than stored or sold^{¶1}. A large amount of the produce should come back to Pharaoh again. He insisted that their profit should itself be used responsibly^{¶2}.

The people were content with this kind of slavery! It had saved their lives and they were immensely grateful^{¶1}. The period in which Joseph reigned led to the advantage of Pharaoh in a custom which lasted for a

¶1 47:13

¶2 47:14

¶3 47:15-17

¶4 47:18-19

¶5 47:20

¶6 47:21

¶7 47:22

¶1 47:23

¶2 47:24

¶1 47:25

¶2 47:26

- *The characters of people are more important than systems and structures of government*

long time^{■2}.

Almost any ‘system of government’ will work for the good of the people if it is used wisely and generously. The kind of slavery-to-Pharaoh that was being practised can hardly be regarded as a model system of government, and yet Joseph made it work for the good of the people. People often want to change ‘systems of government’ – both in the church and in the various governments of the world. But even a bad system can be used for good if the right person is in power. On the other hand a ‘system’ of government might be almost perfect but if there is selfishness and manipulation the ‘system’ will do little good. The characters of people are more important than systems and structures of management.

3. Joseph’s work led the people of Israel into a period of prosperity

- *People need leaders and God gives good leaders*

- *Slavery to Jesus brings freedom not pain*

3. Joseph’s work led the people of Israel into a period of prosperity. God’s people flourished for a lengthy time in Goshen. Good leadership brings blessing for people – in the church and in the state. It is tragic when people are without a shepherd and wonderful when God gives good leadership. People need leaders. Most people lack drive and lack direction. Egypt would have been in a terrible plight if there had not been a man like Joseph to help them and guide them. His years of experience in Potiphar’s house and in Pharaoh’s dungeon had given him experience in organising people and organising programmes. As they were living under the leadership of Joseph, the people grew in number as God had predicted that they would^{■1 ■2}. Joseph is just like Jesus. Jesus had supreme humility and lived in utter dependence on the Father. He has all authority and power and yet uses that authority to be head over all things for His people. Best of all, we flourish because we are under Him and submit to Him. In the case of earthly submission to an earthly ruler there are limits to our submission. We obey God rather than men. But our submission to Jesus knows no limits. Yet it is not painful submission but happy submission. Slavery to Him is freedom.

■1 47:27
■2 15:13-14



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