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Daily Devotional - Thursday, July 18, 2024 - Persevering in Faith.

JULY 18TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Have you ever gotten in trouble for doing the right thing? After being sold into slavery and then purchased by a wealthy Egyptian, Joseph had flourished. He also caught the eye of his master's wife (v. 7). Unlike his brother Judah who did not restrain himself when tempted (Gen. 38:15–16), Joseph was a model of integrity.

In response to the proposition from Potiphar's wife, Joseph gave a speech (vv. 8–9). He told her that he could not betray his master. More importantly, he told her that he wanted to do what was right before God:

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's
mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

1 PETER 5:6

“How then can I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (v. 9). With all that has happened, we might have wondered if Joseph still maintained faith in God. His response assures us that he has. Perhaps he was still waiting for God to fulfill his dreams of the sheaves and the stars (Genesis 37).

In response, Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph and had him sent to prison (vv. 14–20). Joseph had acted with wisdom and faith, but his “reward” was jail time. Again and again in Scripture we notice that the righteous suffer. After being anointed king, David had to run for his life from Saul. The prophet Elijah was persecuted by King Ahab

and Jezebel. And in the New Testament, Paul and Silas were imprisoned for preaching the gospel. God did not keep them from suffering, but He was with them through it (vv. 21–23).

In a world groaning under the weight of sin, walking with God means trusting that He is with us in disappointment, pain, and loss. The apostle Peter reminds us, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Go Deeper

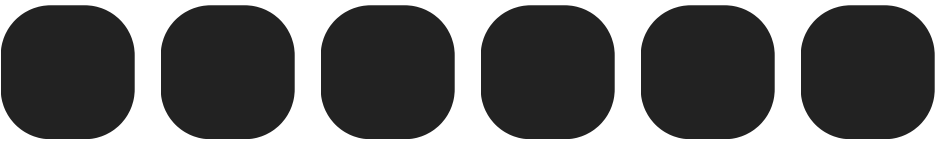
What can we learn from Joseph’s response to Potiphar’s wife? Are there times you can look back on your life and see how God has been with you through the tough seasons?

Pray with Us: Jesus, give us strength to persevere in faith! Open our eyes to see Your boundless love and care: “O the deep, deep love of Jesus,/Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!/Rolling as a mighty ocean/In its fullness over me.” (Francis, 1898)

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, July 16, 2024 - Forever Changed

JULY 16TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, July 16, 2024 - Forever Changed

Have you ever seen someone's life change dramatically? In the Old Testament, Judah is a good example. It was his idea to sell his brother Joseph into slavery (Gen. 37:26). But by the end of the story, Judah offered to become a slave to save his youngest brother, Benjamin (Gen. 44:16–34). Genesis 38 helps explain how that change took place.

Judah's oldest son married Tamar (v. 6). Due to an unspecified sin against the Lord, the son died (v. 7). Custom (and later Mosaic law) required that when a family member died leaving behind a widow without children, the brother was to marry the widow and have children in his name (Deut. 25:5–10). This would provide for the widow and preserve the name and inheritance of the deceased.

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

LUKE 5:32

Following this custom, Judah married his second son to Tamar. Motivated by greed, this son refused to have children and died at the hand of the Lord (vv. 9–10). Judah sent Tamar back to her father's house on the false promise that he would marry his youngest son to her at the right time (v. 11).

Tamar, realizing she had been deceived, took matters into her own hands. She dressed as a prostitute and when Judah propositioned her, she extracted his seal and cord as a pledge of future payment (v. 18). When Judah discovered she was pregnant, he called for her execution (v. 24). She sent his cord and seal to him and declared, "I am pregnant by the man who owns these" (v. 25). Judah immediately recognized his wrongdoing (v. 26). He would never be the same. One of the sons born out of this affair would be the ancestor of the future Messiah. We see how God can accomplish His purposes despite the most sordid circumstances (Ruth 4:18–22; Matt. 1:3).

Go Deeper

Judah's story is shocking. How does this once again show God's ability to keep His promises? Why did this event change Judah's heart?

Pray with Us: God, again and again we see in Genesis how Your love breaks through human sin, deceit, betrayal. We too know what it is to wander, to be foolish, to sit in the darkness. We cry to You—may we remember Your steadfast love!

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Daily Devotional - Monday, July 15, 2024 - Pain and Suffering

JULY 15TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, July 15, 2024 - Pain and Suffering

A philosopher once observed, “To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering.” One question that often haunts people experiencing suffering is: “Where is God in this?” Joseph might have asked the same question.

In Genesis 37, we shift our focus from Jacob to the next generation. Joseph and his brothers did not get along (to put it mildly). Most of the blame can be laid at Jacob's feet. He continued in the pattern of his parents by showing favoritism. He not only treated Joseph better, but also gave him a special coat, marking him as the favored one (v. 3).

God was with him.

ACTS 7:9

Joseph leaned into this role. He acted as the overseer of his brothers and brought a bad report about them to their father (v. 2). He bragged about a series of dreams he had which portrayed his brothers bowing down to him (vv. 5–11). Joseph's brothers seized an opportunity to rid themselves of their brother once and for all. They sold Joseph as a slave to a traveling caravan of merchants (vv. 27–28). They covered their actions by taking Joseph's robe, dipping it in blood and showing it to their father (vv. 31–32). Jacob concluded that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (v. 33).

In this chapter, filled with callous violence and hatred, we may wonder where God is. He is not mentioned at all! Yet, the dreams of Joseph are a hint that God has a larger plan. The story of Joseph demonstrates how God can redeem human evil and even use it for His own purposes (Gen. 45:5). The ultimate example of this comes with the cross. The church father Augustine said, "God had one son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering."

Go Deeper

What part does suffering play in Joseph's story? What part has it played in your own story? Have you seen God work amid your pain?

Pray with Us: Lord Jesus, guide us through the hardships and suffering of this life. Thank You for Your promise never to leave us and be with us until the end of days. We pray to find strength in Your promises and rest in them.

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Daily Devotional - Sunday, July 14, 2024 - FLEE IDOLATRY

JULY 14TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Sunday, July 14, 2024 - FLEE IDOLATRY

Evangelist D. L. Moody once explained idolatry this way: “You don’t have to go to heathen lands today to find false gods. America is full of them. Whatever you make most of is your God. Whatever you love more than God is your idol.”

In Genesis 35 God appeared to Jacob, instructing him to return to Bethel to fulfill a vow he had made back when he initially fled from home (Gen. 28:20–22). Clearly, God had not given up on Jacob, despite his many mistakes. In Genesis 34, we read

how Jacob acted in fear and apathy in response to the crime against his daughter. He also did not restrain the excessive violence of his sons. Yet even when Jacob failed, God was faithful.

Here, God gives Jacob a command to “get rid of all the foreign gods you have with you” (v. 2). These gods may have included the ones Rachel had stolen from her father or gods that the sons had taken as spoils from their slaughter of the people of Shechem (see Gen. 34:27–28). God requires exclusive worship. This is true today as well. The Bible frequently warns believers to “flee from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14). This includes anything we put in the place of God in our lives, whether a literal god, a relationship, a job, or politics. Our primary allegiance should be to God alone.

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:14

God also strongly affirmed his commitment to Jacob, including Jacob’s name change to Israel (v. 10). He also proclaimed, “A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants” (v. 11). God would keep His promises to Abraham through Israel. This also includes the promise of the coming future King who would free us from our slavery to sin (Rom. 6:15–18).

Go Deeper

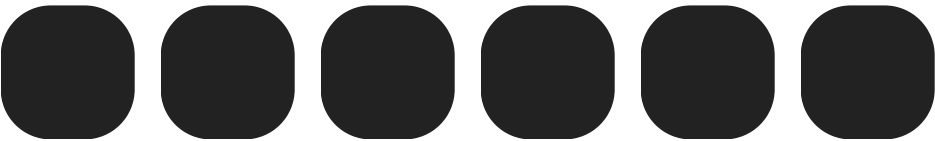
What would it look like for us to “get rid of all the foreign gods” in our lives? What do you sometime put “first” in your life? How do you keep God as your focus and priority?

Pray with Us: In response to today’s warning about the dangers of idolatry, let’s pray that we would seek the One true God in all circumstances, that we would find our identity in Him—not in the promises of the world.

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Daily Devotional - Saturday, July 13, 2024 -

Revenging Wrong

JULY 13TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Saturday, July 13, 2024 - Revenging Wrong

Often in Scripture, a spiritual highpoint is followed by a corresponding low. After the Garden of Eden, we get the Fall (Genesis 3). After Noah survived the flood, he got drunk (Gen. 9:21). After David established his kingdom, he committed adultery (2 Samuel 11).

Jacob had experienced a spiritual high. He had received a new name, returned to the land of Canaan, and reconciled with his brother (Gen. 32:1–32). Genesis 34 describes a spiritual low point. As Jacob settled into his new home, his daughter Dinah went out to “visit the women of the land” (v. 1). A young man from a powerful Canaanite family named Shechem saw her and raped her (v. 3). Deciding to marry her, he convinced his father to talk to Jacob (v. 4).

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

ROMANS 5:6

Everyone in this situation acted inappropriately. Jacob seemed apathetic and unmoved by his daughter’s plight (v. 5). Apathy in the face of sexual abuse is all too common even today. Shechem’s father used the situation to benefit himself (vv. 21–22). Dinah’s brothers were rightly angry but acted deceptively toward Shechem and his father (v. 13). They convinced Shechem that the men of the town needed to be circumcised to intermarry with them (vv. 16–17).

Surprisingly, the townspeople agreed. This may tell us something about how wealthy Jacob was. While the men were recovering, Dinah’s brothers slaughtered the residents of the town. This was not justice, but revenge. After all of this, Jacob was upset because other Canaanites might threaten him (v. 30). Why is this story in the Bible? Here we learn that God’s choice of Jacob was not based on his moral virtue. God was and is faithful to His covenant promises despite human frailty. And we see how God was working through Abraham’s family to redeem and save humanity from all sin.

Go Deeper

What were the mistakes made by Jacob and his family in this passage? What is the difference between human justice and God’s justice?

Pray with Us: Lord, Your Word reveals the sinfulness of man. We acknowledge our transgressions to You, but we know You as our refuge. Your steadfast love surrounds those who trust in You. May we be glad and rejoice in Your promises!

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