

## The Adequacy of Faith: Joseph

Sterling UMC  
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Genesis 37:1-4,22-28

Many Christians feel that one of the most inspiring chapters in the Bible is the 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews. And if you have read these verses then you know that the theme of that chapter is FAITH.

Now the best way to teach an abstract concept like FAITH is by illustration. And this is the method the writer of Hebrews uses. He goes back to the Old Testament and selects some of the great heroes of the nation of Israel and he uses their lives as living illustrations.

He shows us that they WERE who they were and they ACCOMPLISHED what they accomplished because they were men and women of FAITH. We read these verses and see that they came to know God BY FAITH. And they walked with God BY FAITH. We discover that they overcame some unbelievable obstacles BY FAITH. They even died still clinging to a deep FAITH in the promises of God.

Now FAITH is basically a confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass. Philip Yancey says that faith, "is believing something in advance that will only make sense in retrospect." Genuine FAITH is the opposite of sight. In II Corinthians 5:7 Paul says it this way, "We walk by FAITH and not by sight."

So these people listed in Hebrews 11 were heroes because they built their lives on faith in the living God. Even today people like you and me can learn the value of FAITH by studying the adventures of these heroes listed here.

This morning I want to take a look at one of these HEROES OF THE FAITH. His name is JOSEPH. We know a lot about Joseph - the writer of Genesis devotes 14 precious chapters to tell his story. And most of us have studied his life since we were toddlers in Sunday School. Our youth even did an entire musical drama based on his life a few years ago.

Now Joseph may have been somewhat vain and foolish at the beginning of his life but for the most part he lived an outstanding life of FAITH. In fact, I believe that studying his life can teach us a very important principle when it comes to FAITH. For...Joseph shows us the ADEQUACY of FAITH. Studying his life proves that if FAITH is all you have, FAITH is all you really need.

He would tell us that FAITH in God will empower us to survive and even thrive no matter what happens to us in life. Joseph would say, "I have discovered that FAITH is enough!" This morning as we examine the record of Joseph's life in scripture I think we will see this principle lived out in three ways. And the first is this....

## 1. Joseph learned that his FAITH was adequate when he endured PAINFUL EXPERIENCES.

Now, Joseph from the time of his birth was the apple of his daddy's eye! You may remember that to show his special love for Joseph, Jacob gave him a special gift...a robe of many colors. Needless to say this intensified his brothers jealous HATRED of him. And their loathing reached even greater heights when Joseph told them of a dream he had which suggested that he would one day be LORD over all of them! Well, one day Jacob sent his WELL-FAVORED, dream interpreting, many-colored robe wearing, teenaged son to check up on his brothers when they were tending his sheep. When they saw him coming they decided to get rid of this pain in their necks once and for all. So, they decided to KILL him. But RUBEN, the oldest brother, talked them out of that, and instead they did something almost as bad...they sold him as a slave to a caravan of Midianites on their way to Egypt.

Well when Joseph arrived in Egypt, he was bought by Potiphar-one of Pharaoh's chief officers. And so Joseph who for 17 years he had been waited on, hand and foot, and had heard nothing but loving words from his father, finds himself in Egypt...not only a stranger in a strange land...but a SLAVE! He'd gone from FIRST PLACE in his father's home to LAST PLACE in a strange home. He had nothing....no father to protect him....no home...no possessions. All he had to fall back on was his faith! But Joseph learned that FAITH was enough. Instead of being bitter, or indulging himself in self-pity or blaming God, he faced all this in a faith and the Bible tells us that he gave himself to serving his new master so wholeheartedly that he became the most trusted servant in Potiphar's house.

So, Joseph went from being a common slave to running the household of the top military man in Egypt. He learned that his FAITH was more than enough to deal with painful times and this is true for us because our FAITH is not just a belief in words or philosophies. It is a belief in a Person. Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus is that person, He is "...the Author and Perfector of our FAITH."

So we learn that when things in life go bad and we lose everything, we are not alone for our faith is in a God who is with us. We must learn...like Joseph did...that when they face harsh experiences in life their faith in Jesus is enough to get them through. His presence is all they need. It IS adequate.

## 2. And then we also see that Joseph's FAITH was adequate when he was tempted by PASSION.

The Bible tells us that at this point in his life Joseph had just about everything....power, authority, respect. On top of that he was a good-looking young man who, without intending to do so, caught the eye of Potiphar's wife. And she brazenly, shamelessly came right out and asked him to have an affair with her. Many other men both then and now would have been caught off guard and at least momentarily felt flattered by such a seductive statement.

But not Joseph -- Not even for a moment. Without hesitation and being absolutely secure in himself and his God, he responded with equal boldness. He simply said "NO!" Now how could he do that? What gave him the power to resist that kind of temptation? Our answer is in the last sentence he speaks to Potiphar's wife when Joseph says, "How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?"

Do you see? His relationship with God was the lever that gave Joseph the strength to pry himself away from this woman's advances! And Joseph was able to resist Potiphar's wife's repeated advances because he had faith in a God Who always watches....the God with Whom he had such a deep relationship that Joseph cared that He watched. And the same faith that helped him to endure the pain of being sold into slavery helped him here.

So JOSEPH's life shows that FAITH in God is adequate. It is enough! It is all you need when painful times come....when you are tempted by passion....and then it also shows us that faith is enough...

### 3. in times of POWER and PROSPERITY.

When he refused the invitation of Potiphar's wife and fled, she lied and accused him of raping her. As a result of these false charges Joseph was thrown into prison. While he was there his gift of interpreting dreams became very useful. Two of the prisoners had dreams and with God's guidance Joseph interpreted them. One of those prisoners was the cup bearer to the Pharaoh. Soon the cup bearer was freed and two years after that Pharaoh had a dream and he needed someone to interpret it and the cup bearer recommended Joseph.

Again, with God's help, Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream. In his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream Joseph repeatedly referred to God as the source of the interpretation. He gave all the glory to GOD. And this apparently impressed Pharaoh. Because Pharaoh placed Joseph as the second in command in all of Egypt.

Now think about it...only a few hours before, Joseph was a scruffy, ragged, and forgotten prisoner in the dungeon. And suddenly, Joseph had everything the world had to offer. But this can be a problem. It is a lot easier to be faithful to God when things are tough than when things are going good, especially at this young age!

As Oswald Chambers writes, "Not every man can carry a full cup. Sudden elevation frequently leads to pride and a fall. The most exacting test of all is to survive prosperity." You see, prosperity sometimes makes people overlook God...when we have all we need we forget that we need God in our lives.

It is hard to handle prosperity and still have a strong faith. But hear this...it is hard...but it is not impossible! God can gift someone with the ability to handle wealth and prosperity in a Godly way. A FAITH relationship with God can enable someone to use their prosperity for the glory of God.

Someone has said that if you want to know what a person is made of, look at him when he is on top! And Joseph's reaction to his prosperity and power showed that he was a man of Faith, loyal to God. In fact he became more and more trustworthy....more and more faithful to God's truth. He did not fall into the trap of polygamy as did other powerful men of his day. He remained married to one wife. He had two sons and named the first "Manasseh" with means "God has made me forget my troubles" and the second, "Ephriam" with means "God has made me fruitful." He was re-united with his family and brought them to the fertile lands of Egypt to live. And in the midst of his prosperity he gave...he didn't hoard the storehouses of plenty for himself and his family. He opened those great vaults of grain for anyone who needed food. Here was a man who found that his faith in God was adequate even when he had great wealth and power.

So you see, Joseph's life does indeed show us the ADEQUACY OF FAITH. His life record proves that faith in God is enough...it is sufficient.....when we go through painful times....when we are tempted by passion.....and when we enjoy prosperity and power. Looking at Joseph's life shows us how precious FAITH in God is! Our Heavenly Father gives us so much in return for our simple FAITH in Him. We trust Him and in return He gives us all we need. That is a good deal! This morning...could it be that God is offering this deal to you in some way? Perhaps you are sitting out there and you have never given your life to God before. And today you have felt an inner yearning....a desire to know God personally. All you have to do is....in FAITH...invite Him into your life....Ask Him to forgive you of your sin through His Son's death on the cross. And then commit to following Him throughout your life as Master just like Joseph did. That amazingly blessed relationship begins with FAITH. Or perhaps you are going through a painful period in your life. You just don't think you are going to be able to make it! If so I invite you to reach out to God and ask Him to give you the FAITH to endure. Or maybe you find yourself in the clutches of temptation. Let go and in faith turn to God for strength and endurance. Or maybe everything is smooth sailing, your powerful and prosperous. Don't allow that to weaken your faith, by faith use your prosperity to honor God. All of this power and blessing is available to us through simple FAITH. Won't you respond in some way as we sing?