

# Greenways Benefice Weekly Devotional (No 21)

9 August 2020

## **Overcoming Temptation:** Genesis 39 : 1 – 23, Luke 4 : 1 – 13

Hello, we are continuing our thoughts following Joseph's life and this week we are considering temptation.

Temptation touches us in various ways – one way, for instance, is the temptation to eat too many chocolate biscuits. Of course, the solution is not to buy chocolate biscuits!

We once had a beautiful, intelligent border collie who knew about temptation. If we were eating she would sit with her back or sometimes her head turned away from us because she knew 'begging wasn't allowed', and she didn't want to 'look' and be tempted! (A lesson for us?) Sometimes she sat on our front drive watching people go past. A man and his two red setters often walked along the road and he always chatted to her but she refused to move because she knew she was not to go out of the drive without us. Somehow, in her doggie mind, she knew it was the right thing to do!

Joseph was just a young man of around seventeen when his older brothers, through jealousy, sold him into slavery and he was taken to Egypt. When he arrived, Potiphar, one of the Pharaoh's officials, liked the look of this Hebrew slave and bought him.

Growing up in the country, he was a country boy, so the sights, noise and bustle of Egypt must have felt like a completely different culture. He could have taken several paths. He could have adopted the ways and customs of his new land. He could have abandoned his God and embraced the polytheistic religion of Egypt. But Joseph stayed the course! He may have been purchased by Potiphar, but Joseph belonged to God! He had already made up his mind how things would be and had established boundaries in his life.

It's a good thing to do, so that when a situation arises, we don't have to debate it, we just know what we will and will not do, the issue is settled.

It made no difference to Joseph whether he was in his father's house, or in the house of his master, Joseph had determined to follow God in everything. He was a young man of integrity regardless of the situation in which he found himself. And the Bible says (chapter 39 v 2) "the Lord was with him".

Joseph's life was probably a life of endless drudgery and service, but he made the best of a terrible situation and was faithful to his tasks. He was faithful to God and to his human master and as a result God blessed his life and his work.

As Potiphar watched Joseph work and saw the results were good, he could see there was something special about this Hebrew slave. He promoted Joseph and made him overseer of his entire household. Joseph was given control of everything that happened in Potiphar's home and in his business interests. And he served Potiphar like he was serving the Lord.

But then trouble arrived. As Joseph ministered in Potiphar's house he caught the eye of Potiphar's wife. She began to flirt with him (v 7) and soon became downright brazen in her approach, asking him to go to bed with her. He refused her advances but she persisted (v 10). Then one day when they were alone, she grabbed his outer garments saying "Come to bed with me" (vv 11 – 12). Joseph struggled free, leaving his garments in her hand and ran away.

Mrs Potiphar was probably a beautiful woman – Egyptian women were renowned in that day for their physical beauty. It could have been easy for him to give in to her advances. He was a long way from home in a strange land. He could have adopted the motto - 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do'. His family would never have known, and Potiphar might never have found out. But Joseph knew that God would know and that was enough. He refused to violate the trust of his master and of his God (v 9). It was part of the boundaries he had drawn for himself long before he arrived in Egypt.

This temptation came on the heels of a big promotion – a lot of people would have assumed they had arrived. He had the favour of Potiphar, he was the king of the roost at the big house, he did as he pleased and some people might have concluded "I can do no wrong, I might as well enjoy the fruits of my labours". But not Joseph!

We are never more vulnerable to temptation than when we have just enjoyed a great victory. We can feel like we can do anything, and in those moments, temptation and failure are more real than ever. Our enemy is a master of setting things up. He will put us in just the right places at just the right times. He will make sin look so innocent and easy but "all Satan's apples have worms in them" and to taste them leads to disappointment, disillusionment, discouragement and even death.

There are three things of which we can be sure –

1. Temptation is never from God – James 1:13
2. Temptation is always from inside us – James 1:14-15
3. There is always a way out of temptation – 1 Corinthians 10:13 - how?
  - Deal with it immediately – nip it in the bud!
  - Deal with it realistically – get away from it at all costs!
  - Deal with it ruthlessly – do what ever it takes to avoid it!
  - Deal with it consistently – be consistent in your resistance!

We can be confident that God promises, though temptations will come our way, He will enable us to bear them and come through victoriously. (1 Cor. 10:13)

The saying 'hell has no fury like a woman scorned' was clear when Mrs Potiphar took her revenge by lying to her husband, resulting in Joseph being imprisoned. Joseph had played it by the book – stayed faithful, so what went wrong? What was going on?

We may have acted honourably and with integrity but things seem to have gone badly wrong – why?

God had bigger plans for Joseph, so we read - even in prison (vv21 – 23) “the Lord was with Joseph, and gave him success in whatever he did”. God can see the bigger picture for us too, He has plans for our lives – its matter of trust. The Bible tells us we look at life through a 'foggy mirror' (1Corinthians 13 : 12, *The Message*) but God has a clear picture and plan for our future - we can trust him, as Joseph did.

But what happens if we fail? The Bible says “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us” (1 John 1 v 9). We have a compassionate loving God who will forgive, if we are remorseful, and will help us start again.

Can I invite you to pray this lovely 15<sup>th</sup> century prayer with me:

God, be in my head and in my understanding;  
God, be in my eyes and in my looking;  
God, be in my mouth and in my speaking;  
God, be in my heart and in my thinking;  
God, be at my end and at my departing. Amen.

God bless,  
Veronica