

Remember last week, we left off with looking at what various parts of the Bible cautioned young men about loose women and avoiding them and the hazards of associating with them and the rewards of avoiding them.

Joseph followed that advice, even before it had been written, but still wound up with most of the hazards and seemingly few of the rewards.

Hopefully you'll recall from some of our earlier studies that we said that the Bible was written in different styles, with different types of literature, and do I dare say it.....

different types of truth.....

Anybody going to jump on that one?

Can't you just hear the wheels turning.....

By different types of truth, we observed that some of the Bible was written in prose and some was written in poetry, and we can get in trouble if we take a poetic device and try to reduce it to a literal truth....

Another way to say that is that you can't always make a strictly speakin' out of your generally speakin's.

Much of the Psalms and Proverbs are generally speakin's. If you behave in this manner, then generally speaking you can expect this or that to happen in return. Those are not money-back guarantees or 100% promises.

You'll hopefully recall from our study of the book that much of Ecclesiastes was basically a questioning of the optimistic generally speakin's.

We may be given all sorts of assurances of things that will and won't happen to people based on their character and conduct, but when we look at real life people in the Bible we often find that there's times when that doesn't seem to happen.

Does it seem to happen that way in your life sometimes? You do right and something bad or wrong happens to you. Doesn't that make you mad?

I know we're in Sunday School and church so we're supposed to talk like good religious people and deny that we think that expect to be rewarded for being good and for bad people to get punished, and to deny that we feel bad and have doubts and anger when the opposite happens, but are we being honest?

Asaph, who was a prophet and one of the song leaders in the tabernacle who was appointed by David, wrote about this in Psalm 73.

We've got an advantage over Joseph because we know how his story ends and how God was using everything that happened to him for good.

Can we believe that about our own lives and our problems and hardships and pains?

It's easy to reply in the positive until something actually happens that we don't like. Then we

might sound more like Asaph and less assured and confident.

The question is this: faith is described as the ground of things hoped for, the evidence for things not seen. When the present circumstances we find ourselves in seem to be a contradiction of the promise of Scripture and of our own expectations and belief about what's best, do we have a strong enough faith to be grounded in what we hope for and to believe in things we can't see? Will we trust the hand of God and the work of God and the control of God and the promises of God when we simply do not see any evidence for them?

Can we believe, when we're tossed about on the seas of the storms of life that the anchor holds? Ray Boltz was faced with this when his little daughter became deathly ill and his wife was diagnosed with cancer. While he was in the midst of this, he wrote a song called "The Anchor Holds."

back to the story. Boy, didn't Solomon have Potiphar's wife nailed:

Pr. 6:3-4 For the lips of a strange woman drip honey, and her palate is smoother than oil; but afterward she is as bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

She didn't waste any time getting Joseph in trouble. First she calls the other servants back in and tells them and then Potiphar. That way Potiphar can't just ignore it if he doesn't believe her without losing face in his own household.

She has a three-fold strategy:

- 1) she blames her husband for buying Joseph
- 2) she plays up the fact that he's a foreigner
- 3) she emphasizes that this is a mockery and an insult to the entire household, not just her.

By the way, that playing up the fact that he's a foreigner would be effective because at that time in history Egypt is being ruled by non-Egyptians, which can also help explain the ease with which Joseph is accepted into the ruling elite. Later the native Egyptians will rebel and run out their rulers and take back over; that's when there arose a Pharaoh who didn't know Joseph.

Anyway, for the second time those closest to Joseph are deceived by people using his clothes to prove their lies. The text says that Potiphar is angry, but doesn't say who he's mad at. The fact that Joseph is put under house arrest at another captain of the guard and not executed is an indication that he's mad at his wife for forcing him into taking action against Joseph.

Once in prison or the guard's house or in the dungeon or wherever he was locked up, Joseph continues to be a good and reliable worker with God's blessings on him and those around him and before long he's running the place with almost the same amount of freedom that he had in Potiphar's house.

There's a phrase that we should look at in this chapter because it gets repeated so much that it should speak to us: "The Lord was with him." No matter how bleak things look for

Joseph we are given this assurance, which to our minds should bring up the following verses amongst others:

Romans 8:31

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

and Psalm 118:6

The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

or Psalm 27:1

<<A Psalm of David.>> The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

and there's verse five of "How Firm a Foundation"

"The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose,

I will not, I will not desert to its foes.

The soul, though all heal should endeavor to shake,

I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake."

vs. 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man

vs. 3 His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

vs. 21 But a the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love

vs. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because d the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

High Horse Alert:

The following series of slides may sound self-righteous and arrogant and hateful.....

They're not intended that way, but Please proceed with caution.....

The Lord was with him. He was successful because the Lord was with him. The pagan people around saw that the Lord with him. The pagan people around him saw the Lord gave him success. Even falsely accused and in prison, The Lord was with him. Even when it looked like God had turned his back on him and hadn't kept the promises of Scripture, the Lord showed him steadfast love.

The jailer trusted him and didn't worry about him running away or doing something wrong or being unreliable, not because Joseph was an especially fine fellow or a leader in society or had a big house to live in, but because the Lord was with him. Joseph was able to accomplish things not because he was extra-smart, not because he had plenty of resources, not because he had money in the bank, not because he everything figured and planned out in great detail; but because the Lord was with him.

Can we believe that about Joseph?

Can we believe that about ourselves?

Can we believe that about our church?

Remember, I'm not asking you these questions. These are the type of questions that the world is asking of us because "they" (whoever they are) are looking for excuses to not join

us and “they” want to see us fail so “they” can say that we’re not any different from “them.”

Hmmmm #1 - Can we live out our beliefs or is this just something that we learn in Sunday School because it sounds good and sounds like something we should say. When it comes time for action do we act like it’s some sort of nonsensical crap, some unrealistic pie in the sky dream that we couldn’t possibly trust and behave like it’s real?

Hmmmm #2 - If none of this is true or if we’re not going to live our lives as if we believe it and it’s not going to make any difference in how we face life, then why not throw away our Bibles and just start studying the latest book recommended by Oprah or somebody else or talk about current events or just shoot the breeze because there’s no need to waste all this time making up lessons on things that aren’t true.

Hmmmm #3 - For that matter, if everything we hear and read and sing about on Sundays aren’t going to make us think, act or be any different from the rest of the world, then why don’t we just stay home and sleep in and watch TV? We can always come on Easter and Christmas.

Hmmmm #4 - Do we take advantage of opportunities to practice what we preach or do we actually believe what we tell others? If we don’t, then didn’t Jesus call us ugly names like hypocrites and blind guides and whitewashed tombs and even sons of hell and people who have no part in his kingdom?

Hmmmm #5 - Do we know enough about what we’re supposed to preach to practice it? Have we studied our Bibles enough to realize that we’re supposed to be different and in what ways?

Hmmmm #6 - If we do, then the next challenge is are we acting like it? and if we don’t, then the next challenge would be are we going to go back to the Book and see what we’ve missed or forgotten?

hmmmm.....Don’t you just hate it when I get one of these wild hairs stuck up my keyboard?

Just think of the poor fellow we have sitting in prison waiting so patiently on me to shut up and to get to the next chapter so he can be rescued?

the final Hmmmm! (really)

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows that shall he reap.”

What seeds are we sowing: seeds of faith, seeds of trust, seeds of opportunity, seeds of potential, or seeds of fear, seeds of faith in ourselves and our own ability or lack thereof to provide, seeds of failure, etc.....

There’s a contemporary Christian song that starts out, “I keep my faith in the bank and I keep my money in my heart.”

Where’s our faith? What’s in our hearts? What seeds are we sowing?

Based on the seeds we’re planting, do we really want to be around when the garden starts to grow and yield its crops? Hmmmm!